

Lead us from darkness unto Light

(A compact spiritual guide book for
disciples, seekers, aspirants
as well as general readers)

Volume - 2

Swami Chidananda Saraswati

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CHAPTER - 9 SVADHYAYA

CREATING NEW MIND THROUGH SATSANGA, SRAVANANA AND SVADHYAYA

In the first Anga of the science of Yoga, namely, Yama, the main objective is the arresting of the downward movement of the Jiva into greater darkness, into greater bondage, into greater grossness, as a result of its total identification with the body, the senses, the sense-objects and the sense-appetite. This is because the science of Raja Yoga is primarily concerned with the liberation of your true self from its involvement in bondage and Prakriti. And for this process of liberation, there is firstly the need to counter and put an end to the contrary process in the opposite direction, which is the downward plunge into greater grossness, greater animality, great brutality, greater physical identification. The main objective of voluntarily binding oneself with self-imposed vows to adhere to certain principles is to achieve ultimately the effect of putting a stop to this downward course.

Firstly, the vow of non-injury. You affirm: "I shall never hurt, I shall never harm, I shall never injure, I shall never cause pain and suffering in any form, in any way, through anything that I may think or do or feel or say". This is taking up the vow of non-injury.

Then, the vow of Satyam or strictly adhering to truth. This has various implications, the most obvious being, "I shall not conceal anything. I shall not utter falsehood. My thoughts and feelings, my words and actions—they will be the same, they will not be at variance". If you bind yourself to this vow of Satyam, practically you cannot do anything that is culpable, because if you did anything that was culpable, that deserved

punishment, that was blameworthy, naturally you would have an instinctive impulse to conceal it, to hide it, not to reveal it. And to hide it, you would have to utter untruth, falsehood. And that would go against your vow of Satyam. And so, naturally, your whole being will be alert against doing anything that would need to be concealed, that would need to be covered or hidden. And, therefore, the taking up of the vow of truth automatically secures you from doing anything that is wrong or impure or unworthy or ignoble, anything that is immoral or unethical, anything that is against your principles or against what the society expects of you as a citizen, as a Sannyasin, as a spiritual aspirant or as a Sadhak. As a Sadhak you are supposed to adhere to a certain norm or standard of conduct, a certain pattern of behaviour. The society expects this of you. And if you do anything that is at variance with this expectation of society, then you will have to conceal it. And you cannot conceal it, because you have taken the vow of truth. So, the vow of truth secures you against any type of degradation, any type of coming down from a certain standard and level of conduct. Truth has got that great power. It is such a great protecting force if you absolutely adhere to truth that you will become blameless, your character will always be noble, you cannot do anything that is wrong, immoral, unworthy, unethical or bad. Purity of conduct, self-control, Brahmacharya, chastity—these also get safeguarded if you take the vow of truthfulness. Gurudev used to say that if even one of these virtues was absolutely adhered to, the other things would automatically become fulfilled. They would follow as a matter of course.

Now, preventing and putting a stop to the movement of your life into greater grossness, greater physicality, greater animality, greater impurity and Tamas, greater bondage is, we may say, negative Sadhana. Yama is negative Sadhana.

When the downward movement is arrested, the next obvious and logical step would be to give a new direction to your life, an upward direction towards spiritual nature, towards divinity, towards godliness. That is achieved through Niyama. The Niyama of Saucha or cleanliness, external and internal, achieves this movement in the upward direction. Santosh, contentment-that also is a movement in the upward direction, in the spiritual direction.

Necessity for Common Sense in the Performance of Tapas

Then there is Tapas. The turbulent senses wanting to assert themselves in sensual indulgence, in the satisfaction of sensual appetites-that is countered by a certain degree of fiery resolve not to yield, not to give way. Such a resolve compels the senses to get purified in the fire of austerity and penance. Some of the acts of penance and austerity are a direct assault upon the different senses in their nature of wanting to be always in a state of pampered satisfaction. Now, this assault against the senses can go to the other extreme. If the sense of touch says, "Let me be nicely cool in summer", you expose yourself to heat; and if the skin says, "Let me be warm in winter", you go and stand in the freezing waters of the Ganges. Such was the Tapasya that people undertook and underwent once upon a time. They undertook Panchagni Tapas, they observed Chandrayana Vrata, Kricchra Vrata, Jagarana. All this is not completely old mythology. Even now, there are people who do this Panchagni Tapasya and other severe forms of Tapas, though due to the degeneration in the physical capacities of the modern man, modern teachers sometimes caution students against going to extremes in undertaking such austerities. They warn you against a possible risk of total physical breakdown. They say that if in your over-enthusiasm you subject your body to an austerity which is

beyond its capacity to bear, it may break down, and in the event of such a breakdown, you may lose your health, and what little you could achieve in the form of Sadhana through a healthy body, that also would then become impossible. So, ultimately, the result of your Tapasya, your austerity and penance, should not be a loss in terms of spiritual life and Sadhana, but should be a gain. So, the ancients urged you to use your common sense, to have a proper, sane appraisal of your bodily capacity to withstand strain and austerity, and within the limits of that capacity, to practise austerity, to do penance. A certain modicum of austerity and penance is indispensable. It is necessary, it is good, but, be wise, use your common sense and try to make a proper appraisal of your capacity to withstand strain. To what extent can you impose upon your body austerity and penance? Find that out and do not go beyond it. Do not go to extremes. That is the caution given by many. The masters are never against penance or austerity even today. But they say, "Only, be wise. Use your common sense and do not go beyond your limits". Austerity is necessary, but it should be within rational limits. That is the whole point about austerity. That is the rationale about austerity. The object of austerity is to counter the plunge of the senses and their innate, instinctive desire to be pampered and to be satisfied. If the senses are pampered, then you cannot free yourself from identification with the senses.

Antahkarana—The Root of Bondage

Now comes a fourth Niyama, a Niyama which is deeply significant and has very, very important overtones in terms of both the philosophy of Yoga as well as the psychology behind Yoga. The philosophy of Vedanta as well as Yoga says that the entire problem of bondage and liberation lies in the inner man in the mysterious factor called the Antahkarana

or the mind-instrument. The Rishis explain it in this way. They say, "Look here, this physical body is an inert thing. It is made out of the five elements. It is made out of bones, flesh, muscles, skin, tendons, nerves and all kinds of gross matter. Therefore, the body is non-intelligence. It has no consciousness of its own. It is an inert thing. It is a Jada Vastu. It is like a log of wood. Because the Pranas are functioning in it, the body seems to be moving about like a pantomime, like a puppet, appearing to do various activities, though not having the capacity to do any activity. It is the Prana which makes the body sit and chant, move, talk, act and eat. The moment the Pranas get withdrawn into some other inner centre, the body goes into sleep, becomes like a log of wood. In a state of sleep and in a state of swoon, the body is incapable of doing anything at all. So, the body by itself is a factor devoid of consciousness. And being inert or Jada, it cannot bring about the bondage of the Jiva. It has nothing in it, no power in it of its own, to voluntarily try to put you into a state of bondage. So, the body is not the cause of Samsara, it is not the root of your bondage. You have to look for the cause of your bondage elsewhere. Why? For the simple reason that the body is an inert, non-intelligent thing. It has not in it the power, it has not in it the capacity, to cause any experience to you in the form of this phenomenal bondage. Then, shall we seek for the root of bondage in the Self? In the Atman? In your real nature? Here also, the answer is "No". Because, the ultimate transcendental experience of those who have reached superconsciousness or realisation is that the Atman is self-luminous. That is to say, the Atman is of the very nature of wisdom-consciousness and is in an ever-liberated state. There is no darkness in it, there is no ignorance in it. Therefore, it is not bound. So, they call it Jnana-Svarupa. Your Self, your real innermost spiritual identity is Jnana-Svarupa. It is Nitya-

Suddha, Nitya-Mukta, Paripurna. That is the Vedantic declaration. There is no doubt about it. They clearly state this upon the authority of their own personal experience, transcendental experience. So, in the Atman, in your own Self, in your true identity, there is no problem. This problem of bondage and liberation, of joy and sorrow, suffering and all that, is not to be found in the Atman. And it is also not to be found in the body. The body is incapable of causing this mischief, causing this bondage, because of its being inert. And the Atman is beyond it. So, this problem of bondage and liberation, of joy and sorrow, is neither in the body—it is not caused by the body—nor in the Atman—it is not located in the Atman. It is somewhere in between.

In between this gross physical body and the pure, ever-free, all-full Self or Atman is your Antahkarana, your inner nature. Christian theology calls it the soul. In Christian theology, soul indicates your inner nature, mind, intellect and so on. But, by the term "soul" we Hindus mean the spirit. It is in the inner man, in the psychological being, in the interim area between body and soul, in the interim plane which we call the Antahkarana, that the whole problem of bondage and liberation lies. It is in the Antahkarana that the whole problem of ignorance and illumination, of sorrow and joy, lies. You have to find the cause of bondage there. And Vedanta says that you have to seek your solution also there. Where the bondage is, there you have to seek the solution also to the problem of bondage. Out of this has arisen the well-known saying, "*Mana Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandha Mokshayoh*", which means that the mind itself is the cause of the bondage as well as the liberation of the human being. Think you are free, you will become free. Think you are bound, you will become bound. Think you are body, you will only be a body, a physical creature. Think you are the spirit, you will rise into a spiritual

consciousness and a spiritual experience.

The Vedantic Approach to the Problem of Bondage and Release

Therefore, the Vedantic approach to this problem took its unique form of constantly asserting and affirming the truth of the reality of your being and constantly rejecting and denying the other false factor that has now gripped your consciousness. So, they call it, "*Atma ki Srishtikaran*" or "*Anatma ki Nirakaran*"—affirming and asserting the spirit or the spiritual reality of your being, and rejecting and denying everything that is non-Self or that which is not your spiritual reality. They call this in Hindi, "*Sat ki Pushtikaran*" or "*Asat ki Nirakaran*"—that is, affirming and asserting the Truth or the Reality, and denying and rejecting that which is unreal. And Vedanta, of course, has made a distinction, a very fine, definite, clear-cut distinction between what is Self and what is non-Self, between what is real and what is unreal. And the whole process of Viveka or discrimination in the Vedantic approach or Vedantic Sadhana is to make vivid and clear to the seeker what is Self and what is non-Self. And the great Guru, Sankaracharya, has devoted an entire work to try to describe to the seeking aspirant the distinction between the Self and the non-Self, Atman and Anatman. His work, known as "*Viveka-chudamani*" or "*The Crest-jewel of Discrimination*" is entirely devoted to this topic only.

Now, this whole process of constant discrimination between the Self and the non-Self, of constant discrimination between the Reality and that which is unreal, is based upon this truth about your interior, namely, "As you think, so you become". Whatever you constantly hold in your thought, constantly affirm and assert, ultimately that becomes realised as fact, ultimately that becomes manifest as actuality. Constantly think of yourself as the body, as a perishable

human being, as the senses, and you will always be in a body-mind-bound state of consciousness only. But, think of yourself as something completely distinct and different from them, as something completely transcending them, above them, unconnected with them, unchanging and only witness-consciousness, unaffected by the changing conditions of the body and unaffected by the changing states of the mind. Then, if you constantly think of yourself as a being completely untouched and unaffected by the body and the mind and beyond the changing conditions and states of the body and the mind, then, gradually, in your consciousness there will arise the dawn of the higher experience of your own unchanging, eternal, spiritual reality. Until then, as long as you keep your mind in a state of constant identification or at-one-ness with the body and its changing conditions, with the senses and their appetites, with the various states of the mind, its imagination, its memories, its desires, its cravings, its longings, then you will always be bound up in this state only. What you think, so you become. What you constantly hold in your mind, that is going to be your ultimate experience also. And over many births and over long ages, the mind has always been holding on to wrong thoughts. The mind is always holding on to a pattern of thinking and feeling characterised by ignorance, characterised by the opposite of Self-knowledge, characterised by a total non-awareness of your real identity and an awareness of only your false changeful human identity. You have to bring about a total change in this state of affairs prevailing in your Antahkarana, prevailing in your mind and intellect. How will you bring about this change? How will you bring about a complete revolution in your thinking, in your identity, in your consciousness?

The Transforming Power and Influence of Holy Company

There are several ways. One of the methods is: try as much as possible to be in the company, to be in the association, of persons who have lifted their consciousness from this body-mind-bound condition into a higher level, into a higher plane, and whose consciousness is always established in that level or plane. Try to associate yourself with persons who have effectively managed to establish their consciousness upon a higher level and not upon an earthly level. Because such persons are in a state of spiritual consciousness, because they have refused to identify themselves with body and mind, when you are in their proximity, there is some power in them, some unknown quality in them, which induces your mind also to go upward into the state in which they are. What it is, there is no scientific instrument to measure. What it is, you cannot say. It is not any known factor. It is some unknown factor. You go into their presence and you also feel a spiritual awareness of yourself. It happens automatically. So, be more and more nearer. On the other hand, if you are in the company of worldly-minded people, your consciousness also naturally comes down. If you are in the company of eaters, drinkers, merry-makers, people whose consciousness is gross, who have fully equated themselves with the body and the senses and the things of the senses, then your consciousness also comes down. But if you always get into the company and association of those who have created within themselves a new consciousness, who have become a centre of the powerful vibration of that new consciousness, if you remain in their company as much as possible, gradually, that itself becomes a liberating influence and your consciousness also becomes heightened.

This is why in former days, the aspirants were in the habit of going and living with a spiritual Guru. In those days, in India, there was a different pattern of life altogether. For

several years, in the most impressionable period of an individual's life, the individual was taken by their father and mother and placed in the company of a Rishi. The Rishi was always a highly learned being. He was not always a God-realised soul, but at least he was not in ignorance. Theoretically at least, on the intellectual level at least, he knew that he was not the body and the mind, but that he was the Atman. And the student stayed with the Rishi and learnt, got education in the company of the Rishi—student and teacher lived as members of a big family which was called the Rishikula or the Gurukula. And for ten years, twelve years or fourteen years, from the eighth or the tenth year till the twenty-fifth year, the student lived in that Gurukula atmosphere. That itself was a transforming process. Those who lived in the Gurukula in this manner were not necessarily spiritual aspirants. They were Jijnasus, seekers of knowledge. They wanted to learn things, they wanted to acquire knowledge. For acquiring knowledge, they went and lived with the Guru. Apart from the Jijnasus, the spiritual seekers who wanted to know their own real nature, who wanted to realise the transcendental reality called Atman or Brahman or Aisvarya or Bhagavan—they also sought to be in such environment. So, that is one way to get spiritually transformed. That way is to be in the constant company of the holy ones. That is called Satsangh.

The Sadhana of Sravana—A Process of Deprogramming

There is a second way of transformation. Now, the state of your mind always tends to be in accordance with the ideas that are constantly fed into it. Whatever ideas come into your mind constantly, the mind takes in those ideas, and gradually becomes like those ideas. Therefore, if you want to start a new consciousness, a new awareness, in the mind, take in new ideas which always talk to you about your spiritual reality.

Go and sit before people whose only business is to expound the truth, whose only business is to talk to you about the reality, to tell you who you are, to try to deprogramme your ancient brainwashed mind.

'Deprogramming' is a new term currently being used in the West. Supposing a person has been told something constantly and he has become conditioned and you want to take him out of that conditioned outlook or mental state. You hand him over to a deprogrammer. A certain type of programming has already been put into the brain and the man has been brainwashed and he is caught in that condition. Now, the deprogrammer tries to start a counter-process to relieve the patient and liberate him from his brainwashed condition. Likewise, Vedanta says: "Birth after birth, God knows since how long, you have always been thinking, 'I am this. I am Mr. So-and-so. I am such and such. I am a male. I am a female. I am a Brahmin. I am a Kshatriya. I am a Brahmachari. I am a householder. I am a Sannyasin. I am this, I am that'. You have been thinking everything about yourself except what you are. Your mind has constantly been in the habitual practice of thinking about yourself as everything else except the pure truth. In truth, you are the pure, ever liberated Spirit, neither male nor female, neither human nor beast nor god. In truth, you are eternal and unconditioned, Nitya and Nirupadhika. You have no Upadhis. You are not conditioned by anything, you are not limited by anything. You have no name, no form. You are the eternal Satchidananda, ever free, ever perfect". But you never think of yourself in this manner. This wisdom never comes to you. Except this wisdom, everything else has been put into your mind. So, now, to deprogramme you from this age-old wrong conditioning characterised by limitations, sex, age, height, weight, caste, religion, creed, name, form and family, throw a bomb into this citadel of conditioned

thinking, of limited thinking, by thinking of the Self, by thinking of the Reality. From now on think, "I am the eternal Atman, unborn, without beginning, without end, without birth, without death, without change, without name, without form, without any limitation". Assert, "I am the untrammelled Spirit". Listen to the expositions by realised souls, by illumined beings. Listen to the expositions of the truth, of the reality. Constantly go before the illumined souls and take in these thrilling, illuminating, elevating, awakening, new ideas of reality, of truth, of the Vedantic experience. This is the second process of raising your consciousness into a new spiritual awareness. And this process is called the Sadhana of Sravana, of spiritual listening.

But then, there is a practical problem. You cannot always get scope for leaving your own environment and going and sitting in the company of the illumined persons and exposing yourself to Satsangh. With great difficulty, you may have to take leave and go to Rishikesh or Hardwar, Ayodhya or Kashi or Brindavan, Uttarkashi or Badrinath, to get the Satsangh of Mahatmas. By and large, a great portion of your time is spent in the midst of people who are in a state of ignorance, who are in a state of grossness, in a state of body-consciousness. Sometimes you can manage to get a little bit of Satsangh. But, the mind soon gets covered over with the opposite worldly currents. Also, if you live in Rishikesh or Hardwar, you may get a chance to sit and listen to Vedantic discourses on Reality. But, if you are in Paris or London or Brussels, Bombay or Calcutta, Madras or Delhi, you have a problem. You do not get such a chance. There is not much scope for exposing yourself to Vedantic listening. So, what to do? Because, if there is to be a complete transformation of your mental condition, a complete overhauling of the contents of your mind, you have to keep on exposing your mind

constantly to the new awakening and enlightening ideas. You have to keep on pouring these new ideas into your mind. And it cannot be done in a day or two. You must keep it up in a continuous unbroken process, constantly, just as you put nourishment into the body every day. Morning breakfast, midday lunch, evening supper-with all that only the body is nourished. So, if the transformation has to be effected in the mind, this deprogramming process has to be continuous. It has to be regular and continuous, day after day.

Svadhyaya and Its Many Advantages

As against this necessity, both the Satsangh method and the listening method have their limitations. You have your limitations in gaining access to these sources which can bring about the required transformation in you. So, Patanjali has suggested a process which is, independent of time and circumstances and easily accessible to you wherever you may happen to be, whether Satsangh is available or not, whether opportunity to listen is available or not. Patanjali said, "This is a process which will be available to you constantly, available to you always, wherever you are". What is that? A regular daily intake of the mind-transforming, illumining and awakening new ideas through constant daily study of books that expound your reality. Constant daily study of the right type of literature. What is the right type of literature? The scriptures, the eternal sources of transcendental divine wisdom. The scriptures constitute permanent sources of transcendental divine wisdom. All the greatest divine experiences are there within the confines of these great books. These scriptures hold within themselves life-transforming, illuminating, spiritual ideas, powerful spiritual ideas. These you can partake of-these illuminating and transforming ideas—any day, at any time, in your own home, in your own room, in your bedroom if you like, at any time; and if your life is a very, very busy life, from

morning to evening, even then you can do the study at night or do the study in the early morning. Get up early in the morning and bring in a flood of light into your mind through this study or finish all your work and sit up in the night, even at midnight, and bring in a flood of light into your interior. So, ignorance is dispelled, knowledge is brought in. By this constant intake of spiritual ideas through daily study, gradually there comes about a process of mind-transformation. The old mind is gradually eliminated and a new mind is created within you, a new mind which always thinks spiritually, which always is in a state of awareness. That old state of ignorance, that state of wrong thoughts, that state of non-awareness is pushed out gradually; and in its place there grows the new mind characterised by illumination, characterised by a higher awareness, characterised by spiritual light and wisdom. This creation of a new mind, a new view, new ways of thinking, new ways of being aware of yourself, an awakened higher awareness, a higher spiritual identity—that is the metaphysical as well as the psychological objective of the fourth Niyama, namely, Svadhyaya. And it is significant therefore that this process, this Sadhana of Svadhyaya, which constitutes the fourth of the Niyamas, constitutes also the commencement of the flow of your consciousness, the flow of your entire life in a positive spiritual direction, in an upward ascending dimension.

To fully understand the importance of Svadhyaya, you must go deeper into its metaphysical and psychological implications. By Svadhyaya you gradually transform your interior, wherein lies the problem of bondage as well as its solution of liberation. In that area of your being you bring about an awakening, you bring about a transformation. You bring about a total renewal. The old mind is cast out and a new mind is created by Svadhyaya, by daily, regular, unfailing intake of luminous life-transforming, positive, creative spiritual

ideas of Truth-consciousness, Reality-awareness, of the consciousness of your eternal identity as opposed to your present consciousness of a temporary, false identity with the body-mind complex. The false identity is all propped up by Upadhis or limiting adjuncts, whereas the real identity is based upon Tattva. The basis or support for the real identity is Tattva. Whereas the basis or support for your false identity, your human identity, your Nama-Rupa identity, your name and form identity, is the Upadhis or limiting adjuncts that are ever-changing, that are temporary, that do not constitute your essential nature, that belong to Prakriti, as distinct from your true Self or Reality which is Purusha. So, that is the value of Svadhyaya. It creates a new mind. It puts an end to the wrong thought, the wrong knowledge or the Viparita Jnana that your mind has, namely, "I am So-and-so, I am such and such, I am this and that", and in its place, brings about real Jnana. Svadhyaya of Jnana Granthas, the regular study of wisdom scriptures which are a source of light and enlightenment, brings about right knowledge as opposed to erroneous knowledge. Erroneous knowledge is the result of a lack of proper enquiry and a lack of proper discrimination. Viparita Jnana is due to Avichara and Aviveka. In the place of Avichara and Aviveka, you bring about Vichara and Viveka through Svadhyaya. Svadhyaya gives rise to Vichara and Viveka.

The human individual suffers from a loss of self-awareness, suffers from a wrong identification with Prakriti in the form of body, senses and mind due to a basic nescience which we call Ajnana or spiritual ignorance. One of the metaphysical objectives of Svadhyaya is to remove the covering of this Ajnana from your consciousness and bring in a new awareness, a new knowledge about yourself. There is also a second important metaphysical objective of Svadhyaya. Within the psyche of the human being, the bondage to body

consciousness and sensual propensities lies in the form of various subtle impressions and latent tendencies called Samskaras and Vasanas. They have to be completely reshuffled. They have to be completely taken out. And a new mind has to be created. The old Vasanas and Samskaras which are characterised by ignorance, Avidya, Ajnana, body consciousness and grossness have to be eliminated, and in their place, new Samskaras of a different variety, divine and spiritual, have to be created. And Svadhyaya serves a very valuable purpose towards this end. It is a great exercise, and gradually, day after day, it brings about a transformation of the mental contents, the inner contents of your mind. Svadhyaya replaces the old worldly Samskaras and Vasanas by new spiritual Samskaras and new spiritual Vasanas such as would be helpful and supplementary to your effort at attaining Self-awareness. Svadhyaya is a great exercise in this way.

Psychologically, Svadhyaya helps you by creating a permanent background of thought, so much so, when you are free, when you are not occupied, when you are disengaged from outer occupation, you do not fall a prey to all types of chaotic, miscellaneous thoughts crowding in your mind and trying to sweep you away in one worldly direction or the other. Rather, by Svadhyaya, you gain or acquire a certain stable basis on which to stay. Your mind no longer gets swept away by the onrush of miscellaneous thoughts when you are disengaged from work, or when you try to sleep, or even before waking up or during dream. This is because Svadhyaya creates in you a permanent type of background of thought of the right quality, of the spiritual quality.

Normally, whenever you are occupied with some work, your mind creates no problem for you, because its attention is caught in the work outside. It is when you are not occupied

that all your inner Samskaras and Vasanas start showing their hideous face, that your mind becomes a devil's workshop. It is then that your mind runs riot, goes into all sorts of sensual grooves, into various disturbing thoughts. So, to secure yourself against this mental mischief, the spiritual masters have advocated or suggested the creation of a certain permanent background of thought in your mind. If such a background of thought is created in your mind, then, the problem of mental mischief ceases. When you are occupied, everything is okay. And when you are not occupied, then also you are okay, because you have already created in your mind a certain background of thought which is spiritual, which is positive and good, uplifting and elevating. By providing the right material, Svadhyaya helps you in creating such a permanent background of higher thought, ennobling spiritual thought. This is one psychological gain of Svadhyaya.

Yet another important psychological advantage of Svadhyaya is that it gives you, creates in you new material for contemplation, for reflection, for meditation. It is very necessary for you to have clear-cut, vivid and well-defined concepts and ideas about the Ultimate Reality, about the ultimate object of meditation, upon which your mind will have to get focussed later on in the practice of Yoga. If there is only a vague type of understanding about these things, effective meditation is not possible. For successful meditation, it is necessary to have very clear-cut ideas about the Ultimate Reality. And Svadhyaya provides the right type of psychological exercise which clarifies things in the mind, removes many doubts, answers many questions, provides inspiration and deeper insight, and more than anything else, gives you clear, well-defined, vivid material upon which to reflect, upon which to cogitate, upon which to contemplate and meditate.

If your mind is having only vague ideas, nebulous ideas of what Brahman is, what Reality is, you can only discuss a little; you can only talk a little. But, since you have not caught very clear-cut and well-defined ideas about the ultimate object of meditation, about the ultimate reality and goal of your life, your mind cannot take hold upon it, your mind cannot get focussed upon it in a steady way. Svadhyaya provides for this problem also. Through constant concentrated study, with all your attention fixed upon the subject of your study, what happens is that gradually within your mind there comes a very clear-cut and very clearly defined idea of what it is that you have to achieve. There comes into your mind a very vivid and clearly defined idea of what really is your goal, what really is your object of meditation. Then, Brahman becomes to you not merely a world, not just something vague and nebulous and ill-defined, but very clear-cut and very well-defined. Thus, Svadhyaya provides for you material for effective meditation, for effective inner reflection and contemplation, by creating within you a clear-cut, definite idea of your object of meditation. Only when you have a clear-cut idea of the object of meditation can you truly meditate. And meditation is the ultimate process which the whole science of Yoga is trying to bring about, trying to make possible. Because, Raja Yoga is nothing but the science of meditation. Its ultimate process is meditation. It is in order to train your entire interior to be able to do effective meditation that all these various preliminaries, various steps, have been expounded by Patanjali. For the process of meditation, the Niyama of Svadhyaya becomes a very, very invaluable and priceless preparation. So, psychologically, Svadhyaya has this to recommend it that not only does it safeguard you by creating a background of ennobling spiritual thought in the mind, but also provides for you clear-cut, well-defined material which becomes the

support of your inner reflection and meditation, Manana and Nididhyasana. This is the psychological rationale of Svadhyaya.

The whole problem of human bondage is neither in the Self nor in the body. It is in the interim area of your mind and intellect, your inner being, inner nature, which is called Antahkarana Prakriti. It is there that you have to find a solution, because the problem is there and the solution is also to be found there; and the solution is obtained by bringing about a transformation of your mind, by creating a totally new mind with new mental contents. Of the three, namely, Satsangha, Sravana and Svadhyaya, Svadhyaya is the most reliable, because it is always available and it can be practised daily. Whereas, Satsangha and Sravana are not so continuously available. Therefore it is that Patanjali has made Svadhyaya an important part of his second Anga or Niyama. Lastly, there is one thing more to know about this important spiritual exercise of daily Svadhyaya. It is that Svadhyaya is not merely reading; it is study. It is not Patha or Parayana, but it is Adhyayana; it is Svadhyaya.

WHY SVADHYAYA?

When the highest Truth is well said in a single phrase "Tat Tvam Asi" (That Thou Art), where is the need for endless lecturing and hearing on spiritual matters, and for writing and reading on the fundamentals of Sadhana?

One simple Brahma Sankalpa produced these countless universes. When the time comes, in the twinkling of an eye, you will realise the Self and attain liberation. While you are in a dark room, you grope in the dark and almost endlessly search for the torch. You stumble over many things and knock your head here and there. At last, you get the torch within your grasp. No more of this groping in the darkness, no more trials and travails; instantly there is light in the room. It is the search that takes a long time. It is the preparatory step in Sadhana that takes a considerable time.

Need for Constant Light

And then, even when you feel that the Truth is within your grasp, you ought to be vigilant, till it becomes part and parcel of your consciousness, till you actually live in it. It is not enough if merely the light of Truth illumines a dark corner; you must live in It. When in a room you light the lamp, darkness vanishes; but if you put the light out, the darkness returns. Till the sun rises, there is need for a constant flame of light in the room to keep it illumined. Similarly, in the dark cavern of your heart, there is a lamp lit. It is Bhakti or a little understanding of the omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence of God. This gives you sufficient light to see things clearly and understand the nature of this universe, the Self and God. But, if you put this light out by negligence or willful indifference to Sadhana in the false belief that you have attained the goal, you will again be enveloped by the darkness. You must keep the flame bright till the sun of Self-realisation

arises within you. Then, there will be light and light alone everywhere. The darkness has vanished for ever. Light becomes part of the very nature. Darkness dare not approach you. What was Sadhana done with effort previously becomes Svabhava or second-nature now. Bhakti is the aspirant's Sadhana and the saint's Svabhava. Righteousness is the aspirant's Sadhana, the sage's Svabhava. At no time, therefore, these things are given up. The aspirant studies and hears the divine Leelas of the Lord as a necessary part of his Sadhana; the Siddha listens to them with great joy, as he naturally loves to listen to the Leelas of the Lord.

**To Keep the Mind Fully Alive to the Ideal,
Read Scriptures Daily**

If, for a moment, the aspirant relaxes his vigilance and falls into a spiritual or ethical slumber, then the lower pull asserts itself, and immediately, the allegiance shifts from the higher to the lower self. If, at that time, he comes into contact with sensual objects, there takes place a setback in his spiritual life. Therefore, his alert vigilance and spiritual awareness, the state of being always awakened, has necessarily to be kept up at this stage.

One of the ways of doing this is Svadhyaya, study of scriptures. One of the most powerful methods of keeping the mind fully alive to the Ideal is reading of scriptures and the lives of saints daily. For, when you read the lives of saints and spiritual books, a host of powerful and positive ideas rush to your mind and at once your mental powers are sharpened. They at once inspire the man and lift him and enable him to conquer the lower forces in his everyday life. Therefore, Svadhyaya should not be given up even for a single day in the life of the Sadhaka.

Be for Ever a Student

Study of scriptures bearing the sacred truths

propounded by men of wisdom, and listening to the Leelas of the Lord, are never to be given up by sincere Sadhakas, at whatever stage of spiritual evolution they may be. Are you more advanced than Sri Sukadeva who was a born sage and Parivrajaka? Are you more advanced than the great sages who assembled at Naimisaranya to listen to Srimad Bhagavata being narrated by Sri Suta? Learn a lesson from these illustrious examples of great sages. Be for ever a Sadhaka. Be for ever an aspirant thirsting after spiritual knowledge. Be for ever a student. He and he alone is an old man who feels that he has learnt enough and has need for no more knowledge. He is aman dead while alive who does not feel a compelling eagerness to listen to the stories of the Lord's Leelas or to spiritual discourses. You can stave off old age and even death itself by preserving within you the youthful zeal and a devout eagerness to learn more, to practise more, and to realise more deeply, the great spiritual Truth which is inexhaustible, in spite of having been extolled and expounded by millions of saints, sages and seers from time immemorial.

Svadhyaya Prevents 'Back-sliding'

Moreover, forget not that on all sides you are surrounded by materialistic influences. If you are slack even for a day, the evil forces around you would find their opportunity and play havoc. The ball dropped on the top of the staircase takes less than a split-second to reach the ground, whereas it took much longer to take it up. In a moment of heedlessness, much could be lost. Life is short, time is fleeting; you cannot afford to lose an inch of the ground that you have gained with so much effort, in your battle against this formidable foe Satan, Maya, Mara or the evil mind.

The Twin Saviours—Satsanga and Svadhyaya

Side by side with your work, you must do Japa, meditation, study of scriptures, Sat-vichara and Sat-

vyavahara. Do not let this monkey-mind have a minute's respite. It is here that Satsanga and spiritual-literature come to your great aid. They are your saviours. How many sublime thoughts are brought to your very doors by the scriptures! Study the pages of the scriptures carefully. Underline the sentences that strike you as having a direct bearing on your life. Reflect over them in your leisure moments. Thus would you find that you are able to surmount many obstacles and jump over many pitfalls. Is the mind disinclined to read these passages over and over again? That is Maya's potent weapon to put you to sleep. Beware! Are you not taking the same food over and over again? You will have to go on reading and re-reading the self-same spiritual sentences over and over again till they are indelibly engraved on the tablet of your heart, till they become part and parcel of your inner nature.

Repetition Augments Inner Strength

Then will a fortress of Nirodha Samskaras be erected within you. Repetition gives strength. Repetition pushes the ideas into the innermost chambers of your heart and mind. Then the ideas will percolate your subconscious mind. The evil thoughts lurking there will be scorched and annihilated. You may not even know what wonders have been effected within you. Such is the salutary influence of repeatedly studying the same spiritual text. That is why our ancestors insisted on our ceremoniously reading a text like the Gita, the Ramayana, or the Bhagavata regularly every day, with faith and devotion. They will augment your inner strength. Your will will grow stronger. When thus the entire inner nature is transformed into divine nature, then a single effort to meditate will lead you to Nirvikalpa Samadhi and superconsciousness. You will then realise God in the twinkling of an eye.

SVADHYAYA

The fourth Niyama is Svadhyaya. Study is Svadhyaya. It implies study of scriptures, spiritual books—the source of our spiritual knowledge, the source of religion and the source of divine living and knowledge. These are embodied in all the great scriptures of all faiths. The scriptures contain the revelations of sages who have communed with God from whom they have derived a knowledge higher than the knowledge of physical things. This knowledge they have given in the form of scriptures. All the experiences and revelations and deep inner knowledge derived through meditation and superconscious state have been put down in the various scriptures—the Upanishads, etc. They contain the recorded experiences of the ancient sages who have established themselves in a higher spiritual realm through their determined effort having tapped the Source Eternal for all knowledge. They have given them in and through these sacred books. They are the books which reveal the knowledge of eternal verities. They are the books whose declarations hold good for all times. They cannot be changed. They are not talking about perishable things. The knowledge of things of this world changes, because there is a change in the things themselves. But the great Reality is eternal, one without a second and the knowledge about It also tends to be eternal. Therefore, the fundamental truths which they declared cannot vary. They hold good for all times. The scriptures have been further commented upon and elaborated by other sages. The different aspects of the central Truth which different mystics experienced in their own lives, are given out in elaborate details. India has produced numerous men of God, and each one of them in the different parts of the country, from generation to generation, has given his own books. All these

form the treasure-house which we have and from which we can draw guidance through Svadhyaya. Svadhyaya is the key that opens an access into the vast treasure-house of sublime, elevating and life-transforming spiritual knowledge. They give us the wonderful knowledge of the ways of living in a divine way, so that we can transcend the life in matter. They give us the secret of Sadachara, the secret of spiritual living. All these can never be found in any of the university text-books. How to awaken the divinity within us and how to progress higher and higher towards spiritual development cannot be learnt from books of law, medicine, or books on business, etc. To work out the eternal destiny of your soul, you have to go to books other than the college-texts and other books that fill the ordinary library. You have to go to the spiritual books and the lives of saints, which have within themselves the gems of the truths of life. And therefore, Svadhyaya is a golden key that opens for us the doors of the treasury of eternal wisdom, the treasury of spiritual knowledge which guides the aspirant in the path of perfection and immortal life. That is the value of Svadhyaya.

Let us see what is the psychological value of Svadhyaya and also its practical value, what man can gain from Svadhyaya in his usual life. It has got a very deep and intelligent reason. We know that every experience our mind comes to have, at once takes in the impression of it and leaves a mark on itself. These marks become the seeds, and you know how the nature of the mind changes according to the Vasanas that it goes on acquiring. All these things were taken into account, and the sages said that if man is to progress at all and overcome unfavourable Vasanas, some methods should be devised to counter these Vasanas that are coming into his mind in his Vyavaharic life. For countering these Vrittis they have given us Svadhyaya.

Svadhyaya works in somewhat this way. Supposing you drive a nail in a log of wood and you subsequently find that it is not wanted there. Instead of tugging it, you hold another nail and go on driving the second nail. The previous nail will come out and in the same process the second will have gone into the plank. Something like that—instead of everyday trying to pull out and throw out every single Vasana which involves a lot of nervous energy, you do Svadhyaya. Everyday in the morning and in the evening you try to contact the bygone personalities of different ages, sublime spiritual personalities, whose words have got a power, for they spring out of actual experience. They are transforming words. So you place yourself in direct contact with these master-minds whose living experiences fill the pages of these scriptures. When you read a scripture you forget the material world and you are in a world of ideas springing from experience, and the power of spiritual illumination is behind the words of the sages who have given out the scriptures.

Svadhyaya means, therefore, sitting before the authors of the scriptures—Sankara, Jesus, etc. It is a kind of negative Satsanga. You place yourself enraptured with the great ones who are illumined with the radiance of Self-realisation, when you sit in Svadhyaya. These personalities are not dead and gone. They are not extinct. They have become one with the eternal Spirit and therefore their personality is eternal. It does not perish. Their personality is not like the personality of ordinary men, which changes at every death. Thus you establish contact with the sages who are present invisibly. You get the company of the illumined by reading their books. It is not everyone who is given to have Satsanga with Mahatmas. Only a few people get the opportunity of having Satsanga. Therefore, once you come into personal contact with saints, you should try your best to get the

maximum benefit from them; and then you should manage yourself by Svadhyaya. If you take the 'Voice of the Himalayas' you feel that you are with Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj and he is speaking to you. Authors are many. Even ordinary authors who have not the power of the spirit, are able to inspire. Even when ordinary writers have got that power, how much more should be the power of spiritual writers whose every word comes out of direct experience. Their experience is deeper. They do not sway the reader from the emotional and mental plane only, but go and touch the spirit of the man who regularly takes to Svadhyaya. Everyday Svadhyaya is a plunge in to the Jnanaganga. Svadhyaya gives you a spiritual bath. You are always plunged into the ocean of Vyavaharic thoughts. Come occasionally in the company of saints and you plunge into the wisdom that flows from their words. This is what Svadhyaya does.

Svadyayanma Pramadah—says the Upanishad. Never disregard Svadhyaya. The sages have given us this precious process of Svadhyaya, so that we may have contact with the greatest master-minds. That is the great purpose of Svadhyaya. As you go on doing Svadhyaya, if you deeply get merged in that particular book, your thoughts become completely fixed upon divinity. That itself is a sort of Savikalpa Samadhi with the feeling of awareness, for at that time all worldly ideas are shut off from the mind and there is absorption of the mind in the spiritual ideas. As you constantly do this Svadhyaya, what happens? These ideas you take into the mind; sentiment is created by these inspired ideas and your mind is filled with a whole wealth of spiritual ideas. Everyday in Svadhyaya you take in enlightening, higher, inspiring spiritual ideas which give you courage during your moments of depression. Supposing you are depressed, Svadhyaya elevates you, invigorates and gives you everyday the spiritual

manna of the soul. It is the food which you take for the soul.

From morning till night you are in Vyavahara. So many ideas and so many Samskaras are formed. So, in the evening you should do Svadhyaya which will drive out all the anti-spiritual impressions and all secular Samskaras. They are never given a chance to stay. So the one practical utilitarian effect of Svadhyaya is the taking in of spiritual ideas, so that the worldly ideas may be clouded by the latter. And secondly, it is a great help in concentration and meditation. How ? I will give you an analogy. Now, our aim is to make our mind firmly established in a single spiritual idea. That is the idea in prayer and in all worship, so that the mind can ultimately get itself fixed in one single thought. But the mind always thinks about various undesirable things.

In ordinary unregenerate man, the mind is full of all kinds of sensual and carnal thoughts. All thinking is about satisfaction of the senses only. All thinking is about objects of this world. Hedoes not know whether anything exists beyond what he can smell, touch, etc. Suppose you begin to realise that these are not for your real progress and elevation; then you try to think good thoughts and hold on to pure ideas. Sometimes good thoughts come in, and other times bad thoughts come in. The mind is like a fly which sometimes sits upon good objects and sometimes even upon spit. Thus your mind alternates between the various things. But the honey-bee always sits upon flowers. It never sits upon dirt. So the mind has to be weaned away from the first stage of a fly and then it should be weaned away from the stage of a bee and finally established in a higher position. It is this what Svadhyaya does. It binds down the mind only to elevating thoughts. It does not give chance for the mind to entertain bad thoughts. The mind takes in only what is repeatedly presented to it. In the beginning the mind will revolt. But later

on, when you begin to get a taste, without Svadhyaya you do not like to take food. It is an essential part of man. It is food for the real being. When this habit is formed spiritual ideas only begin to dominate the field of our mental consciousness. That is the deep inner psychological working of Svadhyaya.

Supposing there is a big race-horse costing fifteen thousand dollars. The owner will not allow it to run here and there and take in every kind of food. Only concentrated food will be given to it. Similarly, the mind is a very precious horse. It will take us to Brahmapuri or the Supreme Abode. Supposing the owner does not want the horse to go here and there, he will select good grass. He will take the horse there, drive a peg in and tie it around it with a rope. Here, there is some degree of freedom to the horse. It is a limited freedom. Suppose the rope is about thirty yards long, the horse can move about within a circle of sixty yards diameter. It means that even though it is tied down, it has got freedom to take anything that it likes within that area. That is what Svadhyaya does. If you take to the habit of Svadhyaya, it creates in your mind a new pasture-ground. Formerly, it was limitlessly roaming, but now you give to this mind a confined, selected field for its intake. What happens is by constantly confining it to this frame-work of Svadhyaya, the mind goes on taking the idea contained in the spiritual texts. It does not go beyond these bounds. It becomes habituated to Svadhyaya. This is another aspect of Svadhyaya, which all seekers should understand.

So, we find that it is negative Satsanga. It gives us access to the eternal wisdom, expressed by illumined souls and it brings us into spiritual harmony with those people and also gives a new pasture for the mind and acts as a bar to bad Samskaras coming in.

SVADHYAYA: ITS PRACTICAL VALUE

In addition to these, She is also manifest in two special aspects of spiritual Sadhana. We have said that Mother Saraswati is actually an embodiment of the Vedas. Vedas mean transcendent knowledge of the Supreme Being. Upanishads are the highest reaches of the Vedas. We have been told how the very quintessence of these Upanishads was given to humanity in the form of the Bhagavad Gita. Therefore, Mother is present to the aspirant in the form of this unique universal scripture, Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Therefore, all great spiritual teachers, Acharyas, have enjoined upon the seekers to regularly, daily, study the Gita. We must always worship the Mother in Her form as the Gita, by unfailingly going to the Gita every day and trying to imbibe the gospel of the Gita gradually into our own lives. This instruction to read the Gita has been specially stressed in the Dinacharya which Gurudev has given to all aspirants living the divine life at his sacred feet. We also know that in the Niyama of the Patanjali Darshana, Svadhyaya is one of the important items.

We have seen how Mother Saraswati the Parashabda or the Primal Sound is manifest in Her various progressive aspects as Dhvani, then the articulate sound or Vak, and the specific Vak in the form of letters of the alphabet, and combination of letters giving us the Nama or the name and the Artha of the Nama appearing before us in the form of Rupa. As Mother is thus embodied in and through the sacred letters of the scriptures, all spiritual books and also Dharma-Granthas and all scriptures are therefore a mass of Saraswati Tattva. She gives us the knowledge of the Transcendent Being in and through Her Form as the written letter and the word. Therefore, when we take up the spiritual scripture and study

it as part of our daily routine, we actually come into contact of Saraswati and try to be instructed by Her directly as She is manifest in the word.

Svadhya is an important Anga of daily Sadhana. Its importance to the spiritual aspirant is manifold; but at least one very significant part which Svadhya plays in the realm of Sadhana may just be touched upon, for it will show us how it helps to increase the Sattva and spiritual qualities in the thoughts, in the Bhava or consciousness of the seekers. It is in this way. We know the entire nature and the make-up of the spiritual Sadhana is decided by one's Samskaras. The mind is everything; and the mind is but a bundle of Samskaras. These Samskaras are acquired by Vyavahara. Contact with external objects, moving with persons, the experience of these contacts, go to form more and more Samskaras in the being. In this external world of Vyavahara, specially so in the field of Karma Yoga, we find that Samskaras of a totally Anatmic nature, that are totally inimical to spiritual life and spiritual progress, Samskaras of Vyavahara, of Pravritti, of the Vishayas are gathered together in abundance every day by the human being in his daily round of normal external activities. If these Samskaras go on increasing day by day, they become a terrible downward pull, a force tending to externalise and making the mind more and more Vishayakara. But they cannot be completely avoided. It is impossible to completely cut off all Vyavahara for the vast majority of spiritual seekers. Therefore, as a supreme psychological method of counteracting these Samskaras, these ideas, spiritual ideas are made to get into the mind through daily study of elevating scriptures. For by daily, diligent and regular study of scriptures, every day the spiritual aspirant takes into himself a whole mass of sublime spiritualising, life-transforming ideas; and they form powerful, positive, Sattvic, spiritual Samskaras in the mind of

the seeker. Thus, they help to overcome the unfortunate unspiritual Samskaras that are gathered inevitably during the course of daily Vyavahara. They have got the power to give a fresh Bhava to the aspirant. They change the thoughts, the Samskaras and the very Bhava of the aspirant. This daily feeding of the nature of the seeker with spiritual and Sattvic food in the form of ideas is achieved by our contact with Mother Saraswati in Her form of sacred scriptures-the lives of Saints, Gita, Bhagavata, Ramayana, Bible, Quran, Zend Avesta, Dhammapada.

Also, we find this creation of a set of powerful positive spiritual ideas in the mind help the aspirant during Dhyana, during the practice of concentration and inward meditation. We find that when an aspirant tries to do Dhyana, the mind wanders. In the beginning stages of Dhyana, this wandering is very powerful. The entire process becomes a see-saw, a sort of tug of war; the mind is brought to the Lakshya and it wanders again. There is one very undesirable thing here; when it wanders, the field of its idea in which this wandering takes place is all sensual, gross and worldly. This wandering cannot be arrested except by gradual practice and Vairagya. But in the meantime a change can be brought about; even if the mind wanders, provided that a whole set of powerful spiritual ideas are daily pushed into the mind through Svadhya, the field of ideas through which the mind wanders in its Vikshepa becomes gradually Sattvic. Instead of wandering in a vicious set of ideas, the mind has now a field of pure ideas, great ideas, elevating, Sattvic ideas through which it wanders. The wandering then becomes less harmful to the aspirant. In this way also the daily Svadhya is an invaluable asset to the aspirant.

SVADHYAYA

Study systematically the Gita, the Ramayana, the Bhagavata, Vishnu-Sahasranama, Lalita-Sahasranama, Aditya Hridaya, Upanishads or Yoga Vasishtha, the Bible, Zend Avesta, the Koran, the Tripitakas, the Granth Sahib, etc., from half an hour to one hour daily and have Suddha Vichara. Within the context of *Satya Sanathana Vaidic Dharma* which is called Hinduism, within the context of Indian culture, there is a certain concept—that all beings are indebted to the universe around them. We are not isolated. Thomas Merton wrote a book called *No man is an island*. We are not cut off from others, we cannot isolate ourselves. We are beholden to a hundred different things around us without which we cannot exist, we cannot survive. We cannot even go about doing our day-to-day work. Our whole life depends upon so many things, so many factors, so many people, so many functions of others—living and non-living. If someone did not sweat and drill in Ankleshwar or somewhere to get crude oil and make petroleum and if petrol was not manufactured and taken by truck or wagon or train to the petrol stations, do you think Swami Chidananda can come up here every morning? It is because some car brings him up here. We must with humility understand that we are dependent, on many other things, many other persons. I have to be grateful to whosoever brings the petrol up from the bowels of the earth—the Petrol Company and its personnel, its staff and its labourers which enables the car to bring me here. We cannot move a little finger unless someone is there to bring it about, make it possible. So, we are dependent, we must recognise this and be grateful.

The greatest virtue of the human heart is gratitude. Even dogs have it. Therefore, they say that nothing is so terrible as a person's ungratefulness. There is a sonnet: "Blow,

Blow, thou winter wind, thou are not so unkind as man's ingratitude." So we have to be grateful to them from whom we have received something. There is a concept of *Pancha Maha Yajnas* (five main sacrifices). Through *yajna* (sacrifice) we offer a part of ourselves, our time, our energy, our intelligence and thus repay a little bit of the debt of gratitude we owe to others.

(1) *Pitru Yajna*: We are grateful to our ancestors in whose line we are born. We inherited this body from them in which we live and function and also do spiritual *sadhana* and attain enlightenment and then try to serve humanity. In this way we are grateful to our ancestors—immediate as well as remote.

(2) *Deva Yajna*: We are grateful to the various cosmic forces that keep this cosmos in perfect order and precision—fire burns, water flows, wind blows. So to *Vayu Devata*, *Agni Devata* and *Varuna Devata* we are grateful. We have to give a part of our gratitude to the *Devatas*.

(3) *Bhuta Yajna*: We are beholden to so many creatures, insects, even crows because they scavenge. This is *bhuta yajna*. (*bhuta* means creatures).

(4) *Atithi Yajna*: An unexpected visitor arriving at your door affords you an opportunity to serve him with your hospitality. An opportunity to serve is a great blessedness because service makes you shed your selfishness, it purifies your heart and opens up a feeling for others, a feeling of love and oneness. Therefore, be grateful.

(5) *Rishi Yajna*: And then, for our guidance, for our practical instructions, for our inspiration, for our caution, for our protection, for our warning—due warning before danger comes—the great men of wisdom and enlightenment, the illumined sages of God-realisation have left their wisdom teachings in the form of scriptures. So to them the whole world is eternally grateful. These *Maha Rishis* have produced the

scriptures and that debt gets repaid by making use of these wisdom teachings by daily study. This study is an attempt to repay our debt of gratitude to the great sages, remote as well as recent. This is called *swadhyaya*.

Gurudev says: "Do *swadhyaya*, study systematically holy scriptures according to your religion for half an hour to one hour daily and have pure thoughts." Holy scriptural reading should be backed up by pure thoughts, and pure thoughts induce you to take to holy scriptural study, and this study, encourages and brings about purity of thought. They are all inter-connected. Therefore, study of scriptures is an important part of the *20 Spiritual Instructions* and forms what is known as *Rishi Yajna*. To repay our debt of gratitude to these great sages of yore, the ancient men of wisdom who have given us the greatest of all treasures, *jnana* (knowledge)—which alone distinguishes the human being from all lesser species—we should make a sincere, earnest, daily attempt on our part to study these wisdom teachings. *Jnana* (knowledge) makes the difference between the *pashu* (animal), the *manava* or *manushya* (human being) and the *haivan* (devil).

The richest sources of *Jnana*, the most precious part of global human heritage is the wisdom teachings of the great ones. Not to take recourse to them is the height of ingratitude, not to take recourse to them is failure to recognise their great worth and value, their place in our lives and the role they have to play in our evolution. It would be behaving like swine before whom some pearls were cast, if we do not take recourse to these great treasures and study them daily. Therefore we must assert our humanity, our human status, exercise our wisdom and go to these sources of living waters and drink of them daily, attain immortality and make our life fruitful with supreme blessedness and liberation. May God help us and Gurudev bless us to attain success in this sincere endeavour.

CHAPTER - 10 CONTROL OF MIND

THE MYSTERIOUS MIND AND ITS CONTROL

Glorious Immortal Soul! A great deal has been written in the West lately about psychological theories and investigations. The subject we are going to discuss, therefore, may contain several ideas already familiar to most of you. Nevertheless, so important and invaluable are the things which have to be known and remembered about the mind that frequent repetitions are necessary. These are facts which have to be carefully considered and properly assimilated, not once, but many times. If they ever happen to be forgotten, you should be able to remind yourself by such repetitive thinking. The knowledge about the mysterious mind is ancient. From the dawn of civilization, these truths have been expounded by the Great Ones. From times immemorial, man has been reminded of his true supra-mental nature by the revelation of the wise sages and illumined seers.

We shall consider also certain aspects so entirely new that until recently very few, if any, of the modern-day psychologists were even aware of them. In the West, knowledge of the human mind has been acquired by what is known as the 'scientific method'. It has been more or less an inductive approach. The students have sought to study the behaviour of individuals, and from their behaviour, to infer certain facts relating to the mind, and then generalise it all. They proceeded from "outside to inside" as it were. In the East, the investigations have been on a different line altogether. Their method has been the method of intuition, and their approach has proceeded from "inside to outside". Their method, though inductive in nature, has been proved

through the test of time to be beyond error, because their first premise was infallible—based as it was upon intuition.

The Mind as Seen from a Vantage Point

In the East, the scientists of the spirit rose beyond the mind through processes of Yoga, and totally separated themselves from the mind and all its associated functions, and from that point of vantage, untouched by the mind, and entirely free from the influence of its habitual patterns of thought, patiently studied its essential, inherent nature and its behaviour. They beheld it in the light of a tangible and higher spiritual experience upon which they were established, and from where the mind was seen to be a distinct object apart from the seer, a thing to be observed and studied. How many of the modern psychologists of the recent century or two can claim to have thus risen above the mind and gone beyond its irresistible influence and from that vantage point studied its behaviour as a master-witness and observer? The Yogic masters, scientists avowedly of the inner realm of man, did gain a supra-mental freedom and independence and were able, as it were, to "put the mind before them"; and then they carried on their study of its workings in an objective and masterful way.

When the observer is himself involved in the subject of his study, his results are bound to be incomplete and coloured, because he himself becomes a factor in that thing he tries to study. It is impossible to get a perfectly undistorted and distinct view of his subject unless and until he finds out how to study it in a totally objective way. So long as you have not developed a faculty other than this mind (in this case, the supra-mental faculty), so long as you have not disentangled yourself from the mind, you will be unable to conduct competent research in the realm of the mind. As the Indian expression has it: "You cannot see your own eyes". For this,

a mirror has to be placed before your face. Similarly, for studying the mind, objectification of the mind is required. Long ago, there were great seers who managed to reach the supra-mental state in which suitable methods for such objectification could be adopted, and out of their deep studies came the great discoveries which have given man powers which hitherto he was unable to possess.

Mind is a Marvel

Stones, trees, grass and sand, which might have been existing in a given geographical area for centuries, can know absolutely nothing about their physical environment, but the moment an intelligent man enters into the area, he gathers innumerable facts pertaining to the same. He correlates these facts and in this way acquires useful knowledge. He may, for instance, ascertain the composition of the soil, the elevation of the land, the quarter in which the sun rises, the directions in which the water flows and the wind blows. Stones and boulders are immobile and insentient. Vegetation is entirely unconscious of itself and its environment, knowing nothing about the soil in which it grows, about the winds blowing above it, about the water soaking it. In man alone, there is some miraculous factor which gives him an immediate perception of his surroundings, and simultaneously gives him the ability to develop knowledge out of which new ideas are created for himself. This phenomenon is the mystery of human life. It is the mystery of the mind.

If you are in possession of this amazing mental faculty, wherever you go, knowledge opens its doors to you; whereas, deprived of this faculty, you are just like a pebble or a stone or a cabbage. When you go into sleep, and as soon as the mind is absorbed, you 'lose' all practical knowledge. The very moment the mind withdraws—it does not even have to leave you—that very instant you become like a block of stone or a

piece of wood. This occurs every time you lapse into that state termed 'sleep'. The moment the mind starts its activity once again, the whole miraculous motion involved in life begins anew.

What precisely is this thing called mind whose function makes man the master of creation, and whose non-function annuls him and makes him a non-entity? What is this mysterious thing that makes so much difference to our being by its activity and its non-activity, by its projection and its withdrawal? In five minutes man is able to reduce a whole mass of perception and observation into well-marshalled facts of information and, through the process of rationalisation and co-ordination, he incorporates them into a comprehensive system of knowledge. By a no less astonishing process, man is able to walk and talk and execute various intricate movements, all impelled by the thoughts and ideas of the mind.

Man is all too unconscious and ignorant of this inner marvel of his own mind. Who gives thought to thought? Who turns the mind upon the mind and tries to know something about it? Rather, do you not take the mind for granted? If you do notice it at all, it is only when it starts going haywire; and then you are horrified. What greater tragedy can strike a home or a family than the loss of mind of one of its members? With the loss of the mind, a person no longer seems to be a person. Suddenly, then, you realize how utterly important the mind is, that its least upset causes life to go to pieces! A most dignified and notable gentleman, who drinks a little too much some evening, has his thought process befuddled and he makes a fool of himself even before his subordinates, juniors and friends, as well as before taunting observers. A person who is drugged and has his mind-functions arrested is in a state of living death. A total change is brought about in that personality in whom the mental function goes out of order. Such a person

loses all the respect previously paid to his importance. He loses his importance—even his 'individuality'.

The faculty of the mind is the greatest gift that God has bestowed upon the individual soul. There is no gift greater than this. Human nature consists of the mind, but unfortunately, the mind can be the greatest single curse as well. This paradox is one of the great mysteries of life. Everyone knows from experience how the mind can plague man with its restless activity; nevertheless, the nature of that activity is the most specific difference between man and the sub-human species. This supreme faculty places man at the pinnacle of God's creation and is indispensable to his life in this framework of earthly existence.

Now, we see that happiness or unhappiness is totally a question of the state of mind. Passion, unlimited desires and uncontrolled impulses are the unmaking of an individual. They lower the state of mind, and total loss of peace, terrific agitation and intense restlessness are the result. All this is experienced as pain, sorrow and suffering. Such mental experiences as these make man miserable no matter what other benefits God may have bestowed upon him. You may have family, friends and many possessions, but if your mind is disordered or disorganized by ungovernable desires, it can create a hell out of even the best things which God has given you on earth. There is, therefore, a great and serious purpose in trying to understand the mind and in making proper use of it. The mind is designed as an instrument. Thought is the greatest power which you possess. Everyone has heard this, but what exactly is power? And what, exactly, is meant by "Thought is power"? Thought is, itself, your happiness and misery. Thought, itself, is your freedom and bondage. Thought, itself, is your heaven or your hell. Thought can either make you or ruin you. When the thought process is ultimately

stopped, life comes to an end. Thus, thought is life.

Now, mind and thought are not two different things. If a person is able to stop thought temporarily or permanently, then temporarily or permanently, mind ceases to be for him. If this were ever to happen by itself, the person would be ruined, but if it were done deliberately and scientifically, then he would become the master of the whole universe. He would control the whole universe, for he would have heaven at his command. Total and complete stoppage of all mental activity by complete mastery over the mind immediately gives man the experience of his True Being. When the mind is totally eradicated, then the experience of what you really are becomes your very own. You rest and have your existence in your real Self.

Man's consciousness is never as it essentially is. The mind clouds it over, chokes it, and acts as the barrier, as the obstruction, to the play of Pure Consciousness which is your true being. You should consider mind as an instrument, for when its behaviour and its functions are understood, you can use it as the greatest power that God has given. When it is not properly understood, when nothing about its control is known, then you are just a plaything in the hands of the mind. You should recognize yourself as the master of the mind; otherwise you will fall into the error of regarding yourself as a thinking machine. You are not a thinking machine. You are the *thinker*—the independent director and controller of this thinking machine called mind. If you do not realize this, you become enslaved by the mind. As the mind is inclined, so are you propelled. You are not at peace. You are tossed like a piece of cork on the surface of stormy waters. Instead of using the mind, you become its cat's-paw; you become helpless. This must not be.

Mind—The Barrier Between Man and God

It is universally acknowledged that the mind is the only

link between man and the body, and between personality and the external world. Right from childhood man learns everything about the universe through the mind. Senses just feed in data to the mind. It is the mind which actually correlates the data and produces knowledge. It therefore provides the most important factor in man's life. The importance of this factor is recognized by the East, but in addition to this, the East has something more to say about the mind that has been unsaid by the Western psychologists. The East says that the mind is also the greatest barrier lying between man and the true source of his being. It is the barrier which for ever denies him access to the experience of infinitude. It is the limit within which the human being is confined and cramped into the dimensions of a narrow individualised personality. Struggling to expand and go beyond this limited range of consciousness, man is strongly opposed by his finite mind.

To understand, control and finally overcome the barrier of the mind is the most important business in the life of man. The mind has to be overcome. At the back of you there is that Consciousness of a perfect state of being where no sorrow touches and where there is no fear. There is that unchanging Reality which lies behind the fleeting experience of this phenomenal world, just as there is an immovable screen present behind the flitting, flickering figures of a cinema show—a screen which remains unchanged by the rapid shadow-play cast upon it and remains unaltered even when the play is finished. In the same way, behind all finite experience, there is that changeless, infinite substratum of indescribable pure Being. That is indestructible. That state of changeless imperishability is your true basis. That is your eternal abode. That is a state of freedom, fearlessness and joy—and that is blocked off from you by the barrier of the mind.

Now, exactly in what way does the mind deny man

access to that limitless experience? This is a very important question. Upon this question rests a most crucial point: how can the mind be understood and how can it be dealt with? This is a point which has been overlooked in the West. It is in a very peculiar way that the mind acts as a barrier and blocks off man's access to the Supreme. It does not do this pernicious work by getting behind you and preventing you from finding the access. That is, it does not actually lie between you and the supernal experience. You are actually nearer to that Consciousness than the mind. That supernal experience is represented by the innermost core of your being and the mind is a barrier in the sense that it draws you outside and ever keeps you away from that Centre. It ever entices you to remain on the surface, in the shallows, forbidding you to go down into the depths of your innermost being. Through its desires, its outgoing tendencies and its constant habit of objectification, the mind draws you away from your Centre, channelling your being into the multifarious names and forms that constitute the external universe. This is the way the mind acts. It distracts you from your true conscious Centre and scatters you amidst the externals.

Origin of Western Psychology

Western psychologists have studied the mind in terms of characteristic action and behaviour. This approach is due to the way in which their attention was first drawn towards the mind. Western psychologists were primarily doctors. They started to work in the hospitals where treatment of various ailments and diseases was being studied and improved upon, but they found that certain diseases could not be cured by all the medical and therapeutic measures and, in this way they stumbled across the fact that the causes behind many of the diseases were mental. From this discovery, they proceeded to investigate the mental functions and found that there were

certain clear connections between the functions of the mind and those of the body. Right from the start, the investigations of these Western psychologists centred around sick people—people whose illnesses defied medical treatment. We could say, therefore, without exaggeration that the study of the mind in the West originated in a sort of morbid psychology. The diseased mind was the focus of the psychologists' attention.

Out of their observations was evolved a great science, but in its development, the scientists were at a great disadvantage, for they were unable to study the mind as it was. They observed the diseased mind, rather than the mind of the perfectly healthy individual; they investigated the peculiar and the abnormal mind, rather than the mind of the representative person. In the East, on the other hand, the great Masters studied the universal man. The mind as an inner centre of life, and in its universal aspect, was the object of their study, and not mind in "this condition" or "that condition", ill or well. The Eastern Masters also considered both matter and spirit and carefully correlated their facts. They delved into themselves, and through introspection and meditation, uncovered amazing facts about this inner instrument we call the mind. Theirs was a pure subjective study. In meditation, the Eastern masters reached the very heart of their subject matter and there they had the Truth revealed to them. Thus they have authoritatively declared what has to be known about the mind. In this manner, the Eastern origin of this science was so totally different from the origin of Western psychology.

Characteristics of the Mind

The prime characteristic of the mind is externalization. The sages found that the flow of the mind was outward and not centred inward. That is the law of life: everything spreads outward from its centre. But there is a force which is trying to draw everything back towards their source and centre. When

the externalizing force is overcome, man is able to release that re-integrating force, and in this way finds his Centre. When this is done, his search is over. Life is mastered.

The second characteristic of the mind is constancy of activity. Never for a single moment is the mind still.

The third characteristic is wideness in the range of its activity. Not only in one direction is it active, but in many directions. Now it is here, now it is there and now it is everywhere.

Thus, externalized, constantly active, and flitting from one thing to another, the mind is very difficult to control. To understand it requires much subtlety. It cannot be seen; it cannot be put into a test tube and analysed; it cannot be looked at under a microscope. Although man can do scarcely anything about the mind, the mind can do practically everything about the man! It is so subtle, so abstract, and so totally internal that man finds it very difficult to grasp it. One moment it can expand into the thought of the Pacific Ocean or outer space, and then it can diminish to the thought of a mustard seed or a pinpoint or an atom, and the next, with its centre seemingly within the confines of the human brain, as it were, the mind can think about everything up to infinity. With one leap, it can encompass the whole stellar, lunar and solar systems, and with the same capacity, it can think about something as small as a grain of sand. What a mysterious mind!

The mind assumes three recurring states or conditions in every human being. Your consciousness functions through one or the other of these states (referred to as 'Avastha' in Vedantic philosophy). It may be external or it may be internal and, if it is internal, it may be either partially withdrawn or totally withdrawn. The greater part of the time the mind is external and you call this state the "waking state". When you

retire to sleep at night, the mind is partially withdrawn in relation to the external universe, but is still vigorously active within. This you vaguely know as the "dream state". Here the mind creates a world similar to what you perceive and experience during the first-mentioned state, viz., your waking consciousness.

When the mind goes beyond this dream consciousness, it sinks still deeper, and becomes totally withdrawn and absorbed. This third state that you experience daily is "sound sleep". Little is known about this state and you hardly even think about it, but actually it is the most significant and vitally important state, for it holds the real clue to your innermost true "Self" right at the very core of your being. In this state of total withdrawal of the mind—a state of sound, dreamless, deep sleep—you come closest to your true, essential inner nature. In this state, the mind is closest to its source and centre, but at the same time it is so totally obliterated that even its innermost and primal "I" thought stands suspended in its function. The barest indication of its latent presence is the unmistakable feeling of "I rested well" or "I slept soundly" of the individual upon emerging into waking consciousness.

The Primal Root Thought

Why does the mind not abide in its centre? What causes it to emerge again into external consciousness? The first answer is that by its very nature the mind tends to be externalized. Secondly, it is prevented from abiding in its centre by the irresistible momentum of the primal root thought "I". This root thought "I" forms the very basis of your limited, false separatist individual personality and it is this root thought which mysteriously induces you into the error of identifying yourself with the body, the senses, the mind and its moods, and with names and forms.

What is the nature of this root form that the mind takes? It is a universal common denominator and is the basic nature of all normal individuality. It is a root common to the mind of everyone upon the surface of the earth. It does not have to be thought in English. Its form appears in all languages. In the spiritual sense, it is the arch-enemy of inner evolution. All the vagaries of the mind spring from it. It is the thought "I". How many times daily does this thought come into your mind! It is the first thought that comes into your mind upon waking. Imagine yourself suddenly awaking from deep sleep in the dead of night—even before you open your eyes, the first thought that comes to you is "I". This "I" thought then brings to you the whole universe. You may realize that it is the dead of night, that you are resting on a couch two and one-half feet above the floor. Time and space, which is the very stuff of this universe, emerges out of this "I" thought. After all this, your identity mysteriously comes. You know who you are—your name, your age, your false, limited personality. This is the pernicious work of the mind. The basic pillar, the "I" thought, of your psychological personality arises first and the entire structure of the finite individual being is then propped up on it.

Out of this structure comes the thought "mine". While still lying on the bed, you may start to feel, "My back is stiff", "My feet are chilled", "My neck is sore", "There is a draft". Now you want comfort and warmth. Whether you like it or not, from "I" and "mine", the basic selfishness then arises. This is not to be interpreted in the moral or theological sense. This "selfishness" is the natural outcome of the mind function and is the basic nature of all normal individuality. Everyone wants something for oneself. This is as old as the world and human society functions upon this basic factor, unflattering though this be. You may say, "I am unselfish", but the deep fact is

that you act unselfishly because that means something to *you*. It brings something to you which you like and which is pleasing to you. As in everything that the human being does, there is a deep inner motive even behind "unselfishness". In this motive, in this selfishness, lies the centre of the personality, the centre of life. Thus, the subtle basis of man's being is selfishness.

In action, the ever-revolving wheel of the mind has in it two spokes, as it were. These two spokes are attraction and repulsion, like and dislike. What is it that man likes? He likes those things that are pleasant, comfortable and convenient. He dislikes those things that are painful, uncomfortable and unpleasant. The hub of this wheel is the ego.

As this revolving wheel flashes upon the ego, as the reflections of likable and unlikable things are perceived through the senses, desires are engendered in the mind: desires to contact and obtain things which are pleasant and likeable and desires to escape and avoid those things which are unpleasant and not likable. When you analyse the life of any human being, you find two categories of activity making up the entire business of living, since all activity is either that occurring while one strives to obtain what one likes, or that occurring while one struggles to avoid what one does not like. Annoyance or anger is felt when such an attempt is being made and the attempt is thwarted or obstructed by someone or something. Intense restlessness and agitation manifest when a desire is felt, but is not fulfilled. Then, when a desire is felt and fulfilled—but the fulfilment turns out to be something other than the original concept one had of it—what then? Disappointment is experienced; painful disillusionment comes. Even when the desire is fully fulfilled, as expected, there commences anxiety in the mind—anxiety to preserve the thing or the experience thus obtained, anxiety that it may soon end, as end it must and does, for all things are finite and therefore

soon change, perish and pass. What is still worse, if in one's feverish quest of an object one sees others already in possession of it and 'enjoying' it, then jealousy, hatred and envy torment and destroy the peace of mind.

All of these attitudes come out of the prime thought "I" and its chief successor "mine". They all succeed one another at such an incredible speed that the whole of man's life is constantly filled with the internal clatter and clamour of ever-flitting, altering moods, thoughts, and sentiments of this mysterious thing known as the mind. "I" and "mine", like and dislike, desire, restlessness, and then anger, disappointment, selfish elation, attachment, jealousy and hatred ever afflict the mind and keep it in a ferment. This is the common course that the mind follows. Why? Because the mind has lost itself in attending to things outside of itself. Having gone out, by its very nature, it becomes attached and bound up with outside things and thus involves itself in endless external activity. Terrible attachment and bondage is the fate of the non-discriminating mind and the unenlightened reason of the common man.

What happens then is very significant. The moment an experience is obtained by the mind going through the senses towards a desired object, a most significant thing happens, and this brings you to the study of another startling phase of your mind; a most important phase, indeed. It is that the mind immediately registers the experience thus obtained by its sense-contact with the external object. A subtle inner impression is made upon the mind. This impression is well-nigh indelible.

Operation of Subtle Impressions

Just as a seed is sown in the soil, so the impression of every experience is made on the mind. These impressions of experiences are "alive". They have in them the direct power

to recreate the entire experiences which caused them in the first instance. (In fact, each impression seeks a repetition of the corresponding original experience.)

Now, desire always tends to gain strength whenever it is fulfilled. That is the very nature of desire. Thus, as the impression of a particular experience, of a particular desire-fulfilment, becomes more and more deeply confirmed by each successive fulfilment of the same desire, that impression begins to develop into a definite tendency in the mind. Desire is never satiated by its fulfilment.

Predilections of the mind are just waiting to be stimulated. As soon as the desired object is seen once again outside, or is heard about, or is even thought about, immediately the desire is aroused. It manifests itself and goads the mind to go outward. When these thought-waves flow in the mind, the imagination is called into play to show up how sweet and desirable the object is and how alluring its attractions are. The moment the imagination becomes thus engaged, these thoughts manifest as a strong craving. Such thoughts, with the imagination playing upon them, bind man. His total identification with the various moods of the mind makes him a slave of the desires operating therein. Thus, when an urge is felt, you are pushed by it. Even the will aspect of the ego is bound up with the desire nature of the mind. It is thus brought to bear upon the whole matter, and the individual is pushed into action, taken into action, in order to satisfy his desire; the desire, being fulfilled, the vicious circle is once again completed. Once again that experience has been obtained, and the impression etched upon the mind has been made still deeper.

This is the circle in which the human being is caught. He is like a toy, a puppet, a plaything of the mind which refuses all restraint. The mind wants to be full of desire and

agitation and does not want to be controlled. Unless it is watched and disciplined daily, man will live his life like a puppet and end his life in slavery. The vast majority of human beings are just pushed and shoved about by every little desire and impulse of the mind. They have no freedom. Individual freedom is just a myth. Freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and the Habeas Corpus Act they may have, but unless and until they have gained control over their minds and their desires and their impulses, all men actually live in slavery, and their freedom is in name only.

When man has an understanding of the activity of the mind (how the "I" thought is the very root thought of the mind) and finds out how it moves, then he will be able to get a hold over it. Here is one of the most interesting things about the mind; because the "I" thought is completely in the grip of the mind, man is unable to get into the core of his being where the centre of his consciousness lies. That ineffable experience of freedom is denied to man by the mind precisely in this aforementioned way.

How to Transcend the Mind

Now, the problem has been clearly stated. What is the solution? The solution lies in the complete reversal of this process. First you must try to control the externalization of the mind by overcoming desire. Very easy to say—but, how can desire be overcome? This is not too easy. Right thinking and discriminative reasoning hold a key to this solution. Various methods have been given. The great thing is to know yourself to be distinct and different from the desires. YOU are entirely separate and apart from all desire and thought. YOU are Consciousness, a being deeper than, and fully beyond, mind and all its countless modes. This is the secret key. You are not the mind. Know yourself to be independent of the mind. This is very difficult to realize because the mind

is so persistent and your present feeling of identity with it is so complete. The subtle "I" thought is so elusive and slippery as to defy a steady analysis and it escapes calm observation, but when you have managed through persistent and repeated attempts to grasp it and dissect it, when you know yourself to be distinct and apart from it, then you are given a glorious vantage point from which you can view the mind. Formerly, when you were indisciplined and indulgent, you were helpless; but now when you stand aside and apart from the mind and the "I" thought, you are the master. You can observe it as the Witness-Consciousness apart from it.

You must be able to thus perceive all the modes of your entire personality. You are the silent, unattached Witness-Consciousness within. You are not the senses; you are not the mind; you are not the thought, emotion or sentiment. You are beyond even the intellect, which is deluded and overcome by this illusion of false identification. Thus, what you have to work up to, ultimately, is that you are not even this "I" thought which is dearest to you, and to which you are clinging. Even this "I" thought is merely a mode of the mind, like any other thought. The true "I" (the real YOU within) is a supramental factor. You are a pure Being distinct from this "I" idea which the mind habitually thinks. Transcend the mind. You are pure Consciousness and your true identity is "Conscious Being". You are the true "Thinker" of the "I" thought and you make use of the mind to express yourself. This Consciousness is the basis of your Being whence the "I" thought is derived. In your present state of delusion, this is not perceived. Your perception is clouded. The moment the "I" thought is conceived by the mind, the mind is already afflicted by the most pernicious of diseases. This disease, according to the *Vedas*, is the superimposition of yourself upon the physical body. You imply that you are this—the eyes, ears, nose,

tongue, hands, feet, head, etc. Is it not enough that you are caught within the limitation and bondage of this individual body that holds you? Why make it infinitely worse by identifying yourself with every single feature of it? The body is actually a prison-house, and when I say that it is made infinitely worse, I mean that it is the mind that does this work, and not YOU, for your affliction is the mind, with its "I am this body" notion. This mind will not give you rest. It is only when you can shatter this wrong idea that you will know that you are not this body, that you are not this mind.

To make the outgoing stream of thought in-going is the great science of the mind that has to be learned. Begin by non-co-operating with the mind. Whenever the mind builds up a want and wants to do a thing, assert your independence and say, "No, I will not do it", and whenever the mind refuses to do something say, "You shall do it". Always tell yourself: "I am the master of this house (body-mind). I will not be dominated and commanded by the desire-ridden mind. I shall do the dictating. I will assert my mastery and make the mind listen to me and obey me".

Mind, as thought, is not overpowering. Mind, as "I", is also not overpowering, because it has no dynamism in it; it is just a habitual mode of the mind. But, when desires are evolved out of the "I" and "mine" thoughts, and when imagination is brought into play the mischief starts. It is letting the imagination play upon your thoughts that gives them a dynamism of their own. The more a thought is dwelt upon, the more quickly it grows into the dynamic form of a desire. Therefore, the moment that a thought appears, stamp it out. The Hindus say that great forest fires can be averted if you stamp upon the tiny sparks right at the beginning.

Supposing the thought does not reach the condition of a desire, still you must try to remember that it is not YOU.

Do not couple yourself with it. Do not get involved in it. Do not identify yourself with it. Know yourself to be apart from the thought and do not fulfil it. Disconnect yourself from the thought and stand aside.

Even though the mind seems to be capable of thinking a hundred different thoughts at a time, the precise scientific truth about it is that the mind can think only a single thought at a given moment. This is a mysterious characteristic of the mental stuff. Due to its finite nature, the mind can think only serially. The mind thinks with such rapidity that it seems as though thoughts are simultaneous, yet only one thought is ever entertained in the mind at one time.

From this fact it has been suggested that if you consciously raise certain thoughts independently, then no other thought can occupy the field of the mind at that time. Create your own thoughts masterfully and you will be free from the plague of loose and miscellaneous thinking. You will no longer be a prey to vain imaginings. Control the mind. Create right and noble thoughts; then no other unworthy or negative thought can persist.

The Raja Yogic Technique of Selective Thinking

Patanjali, the expounder of the most complete science of mind-control, has said that if you want to get rid of any particular thought, then you should instantly raise a counter-thought of the opposite nature. If, for instance, you have a certain negative thought of fear, then introduce a positive thought of courage. If you have a negative thought of hatred and hostility, create immediately in your mind a positive thought of love, friendship and brotherhood. Fill yourself with the feeling of cordiality. If you are overcome by a thought of prejudice and intolerance, raise thoughts and feelings of sympathy, understanding and oneness. This can be done at any specific instant, with reference to any specific negative

thought. This practice can also be undertaken as a complete course of psychological self-transformation with the technique systematically practised day by day. It is an invaluable inner discipline for your ethical unfoldment and progress. It can help you even in your spiritual awakening.

If you are easily subject to anger thoughts, then deliberately fill the mind with thoughts of patience, love and kindness. Also, set apart some time daily and, in silence, reflect upon the glory of kindness and compassion and forgiveness. Meditate upon it. Think carefully of the disadvantage and undesirability of anger. Reflect positively upon the great advantages and desirability—physical, mental, social and ethical—of a sweet and even temper. Meditate upon the sublime personality and life of Jesus Christ, Mahatma Gandhi, Saint Francis or Abraham Lincoln. After persistent practice, anger thoughts begin to drop away entirely. They are unable to remain in the mind, because the mental stuff has been altered.

If you do not fill the mind consciously with deliberately chosen thoughts, then it will always fill itself with its own wayward thoughts, and that will be allowing the mind to grow wild, as it were, into its own self-willed nature. Selective thinking is the key to the problem of mind control. Discriminative thinking is the essence of mind control.

When you take up the task of disciplining and training the mind, you become selective in your thoughts. Then you feed the mind with good and pure thoughts, right and proper thoughts, positive and pleasant thoughts of your own choice. Keep certain thought-pictures frequently before the mind's inner vision. You will be inspired. These thought-pictures will elevate you. They will build up a new personality within you. These thought-pictures can be written down and placed before you on the outside as well—on the wall, on your table, in the home, at the office, in your pocket, inside your wallet.

Through outer sense as well as inner mental vision, through the eye as well as through thought, mind is remade and cast upon a new mould. It is truly a process of mental recreation. It is a psychological re-birth. This could well be, and actually is, the precursor and fore-runner to 'becoming reborn in Spirit', patiently explained by Jesus to the earnest and enquiring Nicodemus.

Practise this selective and discriminative thought-technique in a systematic way. You will soon be able to renew the nature of your mind totally. You will begin to see that you are not the mind. You will realize that you are the inner artist who is to mould the mind-stuff into a beautiful form of your choice. You have to work upon it even as a sculptor works upon his material—a great master chiselling away at the marble to bring out of it a wondrous beauty. Remember, so long as you think yourself to be one with the mind, the true power of thought is denied to you. Therefore, assert your independence. This is the key to mind-control.

Hatha Yoga—An Aid to Mind—control

In addition to these positive methods of overcoming the mind, you may also know that the mind is played upon by the three inner vibratory states, or movements, called (in Yogic terminology) Gunas—meaning qualities. They are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Sattva implies purity and light. Rajas implies passion and activity. Tamas implies inertia, darkness and grossness. Purity tends to steady the mind and make it go inward, whereas passion and impurity throw the mind into a state of unsteadiness and turmoil and take it outward, away from its centre. The mind which is rendered Sattvic is beautifully balanced. Purity of life, in all its departments, is thus a great requisite for the refinement of the nature and the heightening of the being.

To enhance the steadiness of the mind, the practice

of certain Yogic postures is useful and beneficial, because there is an inter-connection between the body and the mind. Hatha Yoga is here recommended as a supplementary technique, and the practice of a few of the preliminary exercises, for half an hour every morning and every evening, helps to change the vibratory state of the mind. It takes it onward from passion to purity. By learning to keep the body steady and poised, the mind becomes subdued, and a beautiful harmony is created within. These Yogic postures and simple breathing techniques can be practised by all as auxiliaries to augment the effect of other efforts at mind-control.

The central fact to be remembered is that the mind is an instrument. It has been made to be used by you. It was not made to use you. It is to be kept under your control. You are the master. If you feel this fact, power is aroused in you. This fact is truth. Truth is all-power and positive. Always keep yourself, therefore, as the unaffected, detached Witness-Consciousness. Look upon the mind as something distinct from you and soon you will be able to grasp it and chasten it. As you do this, gradually, success will come.

Difficult though it undoubtedly is to develop a new habit, once the foregoing secret is known, the whole process becomes greatly simplified. The right technique is not so much to struggle against the habit which is to be broken, but to start building the new habit that is to replace the old. When this work is started, the old habit cannot stand. This is the "trick" (if you will have it that way), and amazingly and without any effort, the old habit just disappears. Every habit can be broken and the whole mind can be totally renewed.

At a certain stage in this renewal, you find yourself in a very curious and interesting position. You seem to have two minds—a higher mind and a lower mind—a pure mind and an

obstinate, unregenerate mind. The very arrival at this position implies an overcoming of the negative thoughts of one's personality and then alone does one come to the stage of contemplation.

If this scientific method is properly used, and the right emphasis is given to the total eradication of all the negative aspects of the individual personality, life becomes based upon virtue and self-control. Proceeding on in this way, according to Raja Yoga, the lofty inner state is then reached in which all thoughts become arrested and the lower mind ceases to function. Your Pure Consciousness, your glorious Inner nature, full of bliss and peace, begins to manifest. As the silent Witness-Consciousness, you begin to experience Truth. You realize your true Self. This is Self-knowledge, the knowledge of the Truth within. This Knowledge makes you free.

SUBLIMATION OF MIND

You may open the door. We are keeping the door closed to prevent the monkeys. But when so many people are sitting there is no danger of the monkeys coming inside. Each human individual is more than ten monkeys. He has more potential for mischief than that of ten monkeys. Its potential is limited within its little range of instincts and given capacity. There is a humorous saying: *Brahmachari shata-markatah* [*A brahmachari* is equal to a hundred monkeys]. In old days, after being invested with the sacred thread, the boy was known as a *brahmachari* and was sent to a *gurukula*. There were no outlets like radio, television, cinema or sports. So the *brahmacharis* were either studying or making mischief.

What is the nature of mind? It is full of desires and strong compulsive urges. It is very uncontrollable. How much uncontrollable? It is said, it is as much restless, fickle and fidgety as a monkey. You know, the monkey is considered to be the most restless creature. Similarly, the human mind cannot remain steady on one object at a time even for a single moment. It constantly jumps from one object to another like a monkey. But not an ordinary monkey. Suppose a monkey has been drunk and it becomes intoxicated. Now suppose it becomes possessed by a spirit. How much uncontrollable it will now become! As if to add fuel to fire, suppose a scorpion stings this monkey. If a scorpion stings someone, the agony is so unbearable that he will be screaming and shouting, jumping and dancing, holding this thing and that thing. When all these things are added together, can you imagine what will be the plight of this monkey, what will be its antics? They say, the mind filled with desires and without any discrimination is like this monkey.

Can Mind Be Controlled ?

No wonder, Arjuna expressed his doubt, when Lord Krishna went on describing very nicely, how to control the mind, saying: 'You may go to a lonely place where there is no disturbance, where the environment is good and quiet; in a clean spot, prepare a seat that is neither too high nor too low, made of cloth, a skin and *kusha* grass, one over the other; make the mind one-pointed, with the actions of the mind and the senses controlled, fix the mind on Me and meditate, make the mind steady as a lamp placed in a windless spot which does not flicker...' All this is very nicely described.

But Arjuna had known the havoc his mind had created a little while ago as described in the Chapter I, and here Krishna says: 'You do this thing and that thing and control your mind!' Arjuna says: 'Whatever you have said is good, systematic and scientific. But the only difficulty is it is not just difficult but it is impossible to control the mind.'

*Chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramaathi balavad dridham;
Tasyaaham nigraham manye vaayoriva sudushkaram.*

[The mind verily is restless, turbulent, strong and unyielding, O Krishna! I deem it as difficult to control it as to control the wind. VI-34.] Mind is more uncontrollable and fickle and difficult to grasp than the blowing wind. Even if we may be able to catch the blowing wind and make it steady, it may not be possible to control the mind. So Arjuna asks Krishna: 'What is the use of describing all this when it is not possible to control the mind?'

Without contradicting Arjuna, Lord Krishna says:

*Asamshayam mahaabaho mano durnigraham chalam;
Abhyaasena tu Kaunteya vairaagyena cha grihyate.*

[Undoubtedly, O mighty-armed Arjuna! The mind is difficult to control and restless; but by practice and by dispassion it may be restrained. VI-35] I quite agree with you.

The mind is extremely difficult to control. But it is not impossible to control it. It is possible to control the mind."

Everything is done through the mind. Mind is the source of all the problems. The solution always lies where the problem lies. If you have a heart problem the heart is to be treated. If you treat the stomach, the problem can never be solved.

The whole problem of an individual soul engaged in the journey of the earth plane is not outside; it is inside, it is the mind. For example, people who have been born in a family which has been non-vegetarian for generations, for several centuries, are used to that type of food only. Now suddenly, one such fellow, joins a society of strict vegetarians. He tries to stick to the rules of this society. But every time he sees all his people taking non-vegetarian food, there is a problem. His mind urges him: 'What a foolish idea you stick to!' It becomes a temptation that is difficult for him to resist; and there is a tussle in his mind.

On the other hand, think of a person who is born and brought up in a family which is strictly vegetarian for centuries. All the relatives and friends are vegetarians. In his body cell, and hereditarily, there is no inclination, no taste, no temptation towards the non-vegetarian food. On the contrary there is some sort of aversion to non-vegetarian food. For such a person there is absolutely no temptation for that kind of food. Even when he goes to a grand party where good many tasty, choicest delicacies are served, he asks for boiled potatoes, toast and salad only, and he is not the least tempted by the tasty non-vegetarian food.

Suppose, in a family everyone—grandfather, father, mother, elder brothers, are drinking and there always is a bottle on the table. The child daily sees them drinking. When all are away and he is alone, he also drinks out of curiosity. In the beginning he does not like it, but soon becomes addict to

it. Now when he grows up, he is always tempted to take a drink whenever he sees a bar or goes to a party where drinks are served or when he is in a company of friends who are addict. On the other hand a person coming from a family of teetotallers is never tempted by the sight of a bottle or a bar, never enticed by the friends or party. Where is the temptation? Is it in the bottle or the sight of bar or in the friends or the party? Certainly not. All these things have no effect on the second person. The temptation is not outside, it is in the mind only. The vegetarian person or the teetotaler has absolutely no thought in that direction. It is the mental condition of the person which makes all the difference.

Mind, the Cause of Bondage:

In the same way, the bondage, the *Maya*, the *prapancha* is not due to outside objects. You become bound only because you have a craving for this object and because you have attachment or aversion for this person or that, you have likes and dislikes. It is because you give so much importance to the objects and persons that you become bound. If you are not the least affected, influenced or moved by anything, then you will not be caught in the net of *Maya* even while living in the midst of all the worldly objects and persons. So the entire problem is subjective, the bondage of *Maya* or *samsara* is subjective. The same *samsara* exists for all; but a child or a sage or a realised soul is not affected by it at all. The problem is within you only.

What is that problem? Why this problem does not arise for a cow or a dog or a bird? Because they do not have a thinking mind. They don't have desires and cravings, ambitions and expectations, schemes and plans for the future. Their problem is confined to a very limited, small area of survival. All that a non-human creature wants is what it can eat, what it can drink, where it can take shelter, how it can protect itself

and is interested in satisfying its basic impulses and instincts like procreation. The instinct of fear is put in it, by the Prakriti, the Nature, as a safeguard, so that it will not rush to its own self-destruction. It is because of this fear instinct that the moment a fire starts in a forest, all the animals, birds and even small creatures run for safety, away from the fire, in the opposite direction. This is the Nature's device or mechanism of survival.

Samskaras, the Root-Cause of the Problem: No other being except man has the problem because only man has a thinking mind. He has the ability to interpret a meaning out of every sense perception. Everything a man sees, hears, touches, tastes or smells evokes different kinds of psychological and emotional reaction in the fields of desires and sentiments. Had there been no such reaction, there would not have been any problem. But he does evoke reactions, and the problem begins. A man is in bondage only because there are desires in the mind, because there are cravings in the mind, because there are attachments in the mind, because the mind is never content. The main reason for this is our *samskaras*, the mechanism of impressions of such sense experiences, such sense enjoyments in the past, and the *vasanas*, the propensity to such experiences and enjoyments, and inclination for repeating them in the present and in the future.

Samskaras are the in-built impressions in the mind like the grooves of different sounds on a gramophone record. What is its nature? What happens if you put your thumb on an ink-pad and then press it on a paper? Exactly the same impression has been reproduced and will remain intact even after a thousand years. But it is inert; it does not reproduce by itself more impressions and has no other effect. But the impressions in the mind are different; they are not inert, they

are living impressions, they remain alive in the *chitta*, the mind-stuff. They have an effect, they exercise pressure for repeating the experience. They are living impressions and have the potential of generating desires. They create a desire for exactly the same sense experience as one had it previously. There may be *shubha-samskaras* which are good for you or *ashubha-samskaras* which are not good for you.

When you play a gramophone record it reproduces the song exactly as it was recorded. But it cannot produce the voice that produced it. It only plays back. But what is the nature of the *samskara*? When a particular sense-experience is repeated over a prolonged period, it not only creates a latent dormant tendency and a desire in that direction, but that tendency becomes a *vasana*. *Vasana* may be *shubha-vasanas* or *ashubha-vasanas*, auspicious and positive or inauspicious and negative.

The *samskaras* are living and dynamic impressions. So when you are put in a similar type of situation, they become active and powerful and you are impelled to go after the same sense experience. They are so circumventing to temptations that they compel you to that experience. They are also called seed impressions as they are like seeds produced by previous experience and are capable to reproduce that experience like a seed producing a tree similar to the one from which it has originated. So long a seed is lying in isolation, in an unfavourable ground, it remains inert. But if you give it a favourable ground beneath the fertile earth and water it regularly, it starts growing; it becomes a little seedling and then comes out a sprout with a few leaves also; and if the favourable circumstances continues it ultimately becomes a big tree similar to that from which that seed was produced. The new tree produces more seeds and every seed has a potential to produce the same type of tree again and again.

Such continuous chain reaction is the nature of *samskara*.

The human mind, with its imagination, has potential of completely reproducing the same condition or the psychological state of being. This impels the mind to go and indulge in that sense experience and enjoyment. It is because of these *samskaras* and *vasanas* that a man is propelled towards the sense objects, get attached to them, craves for them, wants to indulge in them, possess them, keep them, snatch them away from others.

The mind has four-fold aspects:

In the form of reasoning intellect,

In the form of imagining, remembering and desiring mind,

In the form of feeling mind having emotions and sentiments,

In the form of the assertive ego.

Once a desire arises, it is the ego principle which asserts: 'I want it, I will obtain it, I will enjoy it, I will do this, I will do that.' It now propels the body into activity. The root cause of all the actions is ego.

All these different modifications of the psychological level of the human nature are totally outward-going and make you a part and parcel of the outward world. So you are enslaved by the desires for the outer objects and forget your own real nature, your own real identity completely. You undergo all sort of emotions, elevation, depression, satisfaction, dissatisfaction, fulfilment, disappointment, etc. All these positive and negative experiences are due to your propelling yourself outside through four aspects of your interior psyche. This has created for you a big range of a net spread by your desires to catch the birds of sense pleasures.

Dva suparnaa sayujaa sakhaayaa

Samaanam vriksham parishasvajaate;

*Tayoranyah pippalam svadvattyana-
Ashnann-anyo abhichaakasheeti.*

[Two birds that are ever associated and have similar names, reside on the same tree. Of these, one eats the fruit of divergent tastes, and the other looks on without eating. *Mundaka Upanishad* 3-1-1.] Why the second bird is caught in the net of karmas and their fruits? Sankaracharya says, it is due to *avidya-kama-karma-vasana-aashraya-lingopadhi*; it is due to delusion, passion or desire, activities, craving on account of clinging to the adjunct of the body. So you become full of *raga, dvesha, klesha, kalaha*, passion, desire, anger, envy, jealousy, intense craving, dejection, despair, disappointment. One moment you are up, one moment you are down. Now you are constantly in the wide range of outward propelling desires and that keeps you in a state of flux and confusion. This causes the problem.

Be God-oriented:

Yesterday we saw that all the things can be directed to that one and only Being, the sole Source. In That only can be obtained, lasting and permanent happiness, unalloyed, unmixed, total happiness, enduring, eternal happiness, happiness that would not decrease or change. That is Brahman, That is God, That is the Kingdom of heaven. Direct your entire being towards That. Direct your mind, intellect, emotions, sentiments towards That, make all your activities God-oriented by spiritualising them.

You may ask: 'All said and done, how can I implement it? Why should I do so? I am involved in this world. All my friends and associations are here. I have attachment for them, all sort of feelings for them. I am fully involved in my surroundings and the situations I face. This is a familiar ground for me. I am born into it and right from my infancy, it is a part and parcel of my life. So it is spontaneous and natural for my

mind, for myself, to move towards them. I had not to learn to do so. I belong to this world and this world is mine; so I naturally flow towards it. It is something most natural, something easiest to do for me. But now you are asking me to reverse that process and connect myself to that unknown Being, whom I do not know, who is absolutely unfamiliar and completely unknown entity for me. How can I ever do it? There is a funny proverb in Tamil: How can I know about the cremation ground until I die myself?

'How I can know That which is all perfect, bliss absolute, absolute unmixed peace and happiness? How can I think about It? How can I meditate upon It? It is easiest for me to think of my mother or father, television or cassette-player, a cricket bat or ball because they are a part of my life. I have not to make any effort or undergo any training to think about them. But I don't know that unknown, unfamiliar Being. How can I have any love or affection, inclination or longing for That? How can I relate myself to It? I know my relationship with my brother or sister, mother or father. But how can I be related to That? When I don't know what It is, how can I meditate on It?'

True, your problem is genuine. But the solution is quite simple: *Detach from here, attach There.*

'But how to do it is a big problem. It is quite easy to attach myself here, because everything here is familiar to me. But how to think of That?'

So first of all, you should get yourself familiar, get yourself acquainted, to That whom you want to worship, love, adore, on whom you want to meditate upon, towards whom you want to move.

How you can get yourself thoroughly acquainted with That? There are three different ways. The first is the heredity. If you are born in a family where both the mother and father are devotees and they are doing *puja*, and *kirtan*, singing

devotional songs, reading about the *lilas* of the Lord and the lives of saints, talking about Him, you will automatically develop love for Him.

Secondly, if you are not born in such a family, you should think about our rich heritage, you should get yourself acquainted with it by reading the spiritual books. There is a unique tradition in all the parts of India. There are some people whose sole occupation and allocation is to master the scriptures and to go to various places and narrate, expound and elucidate them. Many institutions make elaborate arrangements for such discourses regularly and provide the venue. They go to remote villages also and explain the scriptures in their own, simple, easy way supplementing it with illustrations from day-to-day rural life. This is a part of Indian way of life. So even an illiterate villager also knows some philosophy; he knows about Shabari, Ahalya and many such characters. He knows about *Bhakti*, he knows about God's grace.

Our scriptures are abound in *stotras* and *stutis*, hymns and paeans of the Lord, glorifying Him. Our ancient rishis have not missed, during the narration of the main theme, a single opportunity of introducing *stutis*; so we find them at frequent intervals. We develop great admiration and adoration, great reverence and veneration for the supreme Being. If you listen to the glories, grandeur and greatness of God and the desirability of that wonderful Experience of attaining that Being and attaining the supreme Bliss, Peace and Happiness, and going beyond all sorrow and suffering, it will create in you a longing for God, for that Experience and your life will certainly be changed.

Thirdly, once your taste is developed in this direction due to your family background and upbringing or through listening to the Scriptures, you develop a strong desire to

acquire more knowledge and naturally you buy some books. Now the original texts of most of the scriptures are available and they have also been translated in all the Indian languages. So you begin to read and study our great scriptures in your leisure hours, prepare your own personal notes and discuss the finer points with like-minded friends. You slowly build up your own library of inspiring literature. What you argued to be unknown and unfamiliar becomes known and so close to your heart that you will spend most of your spare time on That and you don't like to waste your time on the worldly things. Now, you like to read about It, you like to think about It, you like to talk about It and you like the company of people with such tendency only. Now unknown That becomes your best friend and guide, the remote becomes the closest, He becomes a part of your life, you cannot live without Him.

Shravana-Sadhana

In all the paths of Yoga, shravana is considered as a very important sadhana. It is listening to the description, to a clear elaborate nature and the glorification of that Being, the transcendental Reality. In *Vedanta Vichara Marga* of *Jnana-Yoga* its importance is clearly accepted. In the *Bhakti-sutras* of Devarshi Narada and Maharshi Shandilya, a very systematic and scientific method of developing the devotion is outlined; and the very first step is *shravana*. If your temperament is not intellectual, if you are emotional by nature, if you have spontaneous ability to have affection, attachment and love for God, or if you are artistic by temperament, then you are naturally attracted to the *Bhakti-Marga*. You should develop deep and firm attachment towards your deity by the *shravana* of His greatness, grandeur and glories. In addition to whatever has been expounded in the *Bhakti-sutras* of Devarshi Narada and Maharshi Shandilya, the *Maha-Purana* of *Srimad-Bhagavatam* gives us a very systematic and

practical method of developing devotion in gradual stages and progressing steadily on the spiritual path. Here also the very first stage is *Shravana*.

In the science of meditation of Raja-Yoga of Maharshi Patanjali, though it has not been specifically stated as a specific sadhana, it has been included in another hidden form. The second *anga*, the limb, of the *Ashtanga Yoga* is daily *svadhyaya*. In *svadhyaya*, *shravana* is more important way to grasp the right understanding. In ancient times, the main method of imbibing knowledge was listening to the teachings of Guru and other great sages. You may study at home, but you may have many doubts or you may not have grasped the proper meaning. So listening to others is necessary. The proper understanding of the scriptures and the basic truths of life is possible only after a complete purification of the mind and the heart, refinement of the intellect and deep faith.

In ancient times, an aspirant was approaching a guru with the request: 'Please elaborate the nature of the Reality to me so that I can meditate on It.' The guru used to say: 'First of all you prepare yourself for that higher knowledge. A gross mind cannot grasp subtle truths. First of all, the mind is to be refined and it is to be made pure and subtle.' Even if these truths are told to an impure mind, it will not retain their impressions. So *chitta-shuddhi*, the purification of the mind-stuff, purification of the interior and sharpening of the discriminating intelligence are the necessary pre-conditions. *Shravana* is of great help in this direction. So *shravana* is the preliminary *sadhana* that prepares you for higher *sadhana* and the higher knowledge of Vedanta.

Why these preliminary sadhanas? If your mind is always filled with grossness and if you have no proper discrimination, it will always go after sense indulgence; and as long as the mind is craving for the sense pleasures, you

will not develop a keen discrimination, your intelligence will never be refined. Our ancient *rishis* must have reflected upon this. So our scriptures clearly declare that: 'Have a clean discrimination and Realise it. Free yourself from the deceptive nature of the sense objects, free yourself from the harmful nature of sense indulgence, free yourself from the clutches of your gross nature by constantly exercising discrimination, everyday, every moment of your life.'

You must be a person of great discrimination, intellectual, ethical and spiritual discrimination, so that the material world cannot fool you, cannot trap you. Then only you will be really free and you will be able to imbibe the great wisdom teachings.

Know it well that there is nothing good for you in these sense objects which attract you, entrap you, enslave you. They are the root-cause of all your pain and diseases, sorrow and suffering, disturbance and restlessness. So long the mind is restless, there cannot be real peace or happiness. Whatever intense passion and desire you may have for the sense objects and the sense enjoyments and all that, you gradually get rid of that with firm determination and constant discrimination. You convert your raga, passion, for the sense objects into *viraga*, dispassion, and then develop *vairagya*, detachment. You will have to exercise very strict discipline on your mind. Because the senses have been habituated with certain behavioral pattern over a long period and you have never tried to curb them, you have never tried to exercise any *samyama*, sense-control due to your delusion and ignorance. You have never come in contact with that type of people, that type of a society, that type of the world that do not run after the sense pleasures, but are trying to curb them. So you think you must have sense enjoyment. Soon you are accustomed to have sense enjoyments. Now it won't leave you unless you

make a very determined effort.

Develop that firm determination. You must control the turbulent behavior of your mind. You must control its constant chasing of the sense pleasure. You must try to restrain yourself. This is one pattern of disciplining your mind.

Sadhan-Chatushtaya

In the ancient times, the *guru* used to tell to a new seeker: 'First of all, practise the four-fold sadhana of *viveka*, *vairagya*, *shat-sampatti* and *mumukshutva*; and then only, I will give you the knowledge of the subtle truths of philosophy and Vedanta. Otherwise, even if I tell you these subtle truths, you will not be able to understand the correct implications of what I teach you, you will not be able to retain it. This requires purity of the mind and subtle intelligence.' Therefore, first you get yourself established in four-fold sadhana; then only you are qualified to do shravana sadhana according to the Vedantic *Jnana-Marga*.

In *sadhan-chatushtaya*, the four-fold *sadhana*, *viveka* or discrimination is the first aspect, *vairagya* or dispassion the second.

Shat-sampatti: The third *sadhan* is *Shat-sampatti*. It includes *shama*, *dama*, *uparati*, *titiksha*, *shraddha* and *samadhana*.

Shama: The determination to subdue these will come only when you realise: 'As long as I allow the senses to push towards the sense objects and allow myself to get caught in the excitement of the sense indulgence, my mind will always be restless, agitated and disturbed, it will be in tumult and it can never be calm or serene. I can never have peace and happiness.' Once the mind realises that this is not the proper direction, it will say: 'No I will not think of the sense objects. The senses naturally plunge in the sense objects, only if I think of them. The problem arises in *my thinking* of the sense

objects. The sense objects are inert and non-intelligent; and so they cannot trouble me by themselves. But I myself allow them to become troublesome; because I do not control my mind, because my mind is full of desires to pursue them, enjoy them, experience them. So long as I have desires for them, my mind dwells upon them. Now I shall not allow it to dwell upon them. I shall divert my mind on to higher things. I shall cultivate different interests, other than mere sense indulgence. In this way, I shall be able to wean my mind away from its habitual propensity of chasing the sense objects and dwelling upon them.'

Now the mind will say; 'Like a lotus remaining unaffected by water even though remaining in the water, I shall remain unaffected even while living in the midst of the sense objects. Even if they come in my gaze I will not look towards them, I will withdraw my attention from the sense objects. First of all I will withdraw the senses from the sense objects; but if in spite of that the objects come into my perception, and if the linking sense is aware of it, I will withdraw my connection with that sense; and if it is too late, I will refuge to identify myself with the sensation that has already been created. Even if an object has come in contact with the sense, the sense sends the message and there is a cognition of the sensation, I will refuse to identify myself with that sensation.'

'In this way, I will exercise triple withdrawal: The first and foremost, the most effective and the best, is the withdrawal of sense from the sense object. Secondly, it is the withdrawal of the mind from the sense. If both these fail and the sensation already reaches the mind, I will refuge to identify myself with that, I will not become an enjoyer of it, but will remain merely a pure witness to the happening and will remain absolutely detached and unaffected.'

As the mind begins to practise constantly this inward,

invisible, subjective discipline, gradually it becomes free from the influence of the sense objects, free from the outer world of perception; it does not move towards the sense objects but thinks of higher things. And the mind ultimately attains a state of quiescence, absolute serenity. This state of quiescence is called *shama*. *Shama* is a discipline of establishing a state of serene quiescence in the mind. The mind will no more be restless, agitating or outward-going. Such inner stability must be supported by disciplining the senses, curbing of the senses.

Dama: *Dama* is controlling of the tumultuous and extremely uncontrollable activity of the senses. Just as a rider of a chariot exercises a firm grip over the reins and controls the horses, exercising a constant vigil to check them and not allowing them to move in a wayward manner; in the same way, the five horses of the senses are checked and controlled by the awakened intellect endowed with keen, active discrimination. Now it does not allow them to sway and to do what they like. Now you are the master, you give proper directive, you determine the path on which the five horses will have to tread. Now you have the control and you do not allow them to do what they like. This is known as *dama*, the subduing of the senses. This is the first step in the third aspect.

Uparati: This three-fold discipline will bring a complete transformation in your entire nature. The natural tendency of the mind and the entire psyche is centrifugal, it is to propel out and chase the outer objects of attractions and sense pleasures. It moves in all the directions towards thousands of objects and the world is filled with countless objects. The bees are always wandering here and there, never sitting quietly. But if the queen-bee moves to another place, all other bees will abandon their chase and follow it. Similarly, when the mind settles on higher things, all the senses follow the leader and

give up their natural tendency to chase the sense objects. If the leader of a political party decides to change the alliance, all the cadre of that party will automatically join that alliance and become a part of it. Similarly, if the mind carefully observes and analyses the hollowness of the glitter of the attractive objects of this *Maya-bazaar* and of the repeated sense experiences, and starts discriminating and turns away from the sense objects, it will be awakened. It is like joining a new alliance by the leader and the senses will follow it. When the mind becomes established in that state, a peculiar marvellous thing happens: the senses give up their in-born natural propensity to go towards the sense objects of attraction and temptation. The senses which were the main cause of the problem, give up their fundamental nature and the problem automatically ceases to exist. The senses now follow the new nature of the awakened mind, the mind full of discrimination, dispassion and detachment, the mind which is desireless and free from passion. When that happens, it is known as the fourth *sampatti* and is called *uparati*.

Titiksha: The third factor that obsesses and troubles the mind is the unpleasant experiences which upset you immediately. Too much of heat or cold, some little discomfort or inconvenience upsets you easily. Be a Spartan and develop a habit of bearing these without being upset. Don't leave all your work to correct them and to restore that comfort immediately. Don't allow it to distract you from your work, from your path. As the saying goes; Grin and bear it. This is called *titiksha*. It means to bear the little discomforts and inconveniences, troubles and unpleasant experiences, little ups and downs, which are part and parcel of everyday life. If you go on being upset by them and try to correct the situation, your time and energy will be wasted and your psyche will be affected. You should bear them and ignore them unless they

are of a very dangerous nature.

Shraddha: *Samadhana* is possible only if you have absolute faith in whatever ideal you may have chosen. You should convince yourself: I know I have chosen the right path. Many have treaded this path and attained the supreme Being. They say this is the greatest Experience. They cannot be wrong. They had no personal axe to grind. They had no thread attached to it. They have nothing to gain or lose whether we adopt it or not. They did not want us to suffer. They wanted us to attain our highest welfare. They were our well-wishers, they have motiveless goodwill for us. It will be foolish for me not to have complete faith in them. So I have total faith. This is the sixth *sampatti* known as *shraddha*.

Samadhana: When one is well established in that state, he resolves: 'That and That alone is my goal. One-pointedness will be my state. I will not be attracted by anything other than That. There will never be any lack of self-control. I will never allow my aspiration to tone down even a little. I will not stop till the great goal is attained.'

Now your daily routine is totally changed. You are no more interested in petty things; you are no more wasting your time and energy after them. All your energy is fully directed in the inner direction, towards your goal that you have accepted. This is the fifth *sampatti* called *samadhana*, giving oneself entirely to a single ideal that you have adopted.

Mumukshutva: The fourth *sadhana* is *mumukshutva*, a strong desire of final emancipation. If all the things described above are to be kept up at the same pitch of intensity, you must have a very keen and intense longing for attaining Liberation. If you become a little slack, if you allow your effort to be diluted a little, finished. You may fall back to the square one.

What a great thing, great fortune it was to become

one of the twelve disciples of Lord Jesus Christ! But one of them was tempted a little by the glitter of the gold and betrayed his Master. This is symbolic. Even after reaching such a very high state, if you allow your keen, intense involvement in that state to be diluted a little, finished. Therefore, intense longing for the goal is necessary.

CHAPTER - 11 SADHANA

KNOWLEDGE IS MEANT TO BE LIVED

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved seekers and *sadhaks* who are gathered together here in the spiritual presence of worshipful and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, in his sacred *samadhistan* at this holy hour! You have been here for a period of chanting, *kirtan*, *guru stotra*, *santi path* and silent meditation with which you have opened your new day in a very *sattvic* and holy way, so as to give it a proper spiritual direction, so that this *bhav* may be carried throughout the remainder of the day until you retire for the night. In participating in this spiritual *sadhana*, I have the good fortune to place before you an important truth about Yoga and Vedanta, an important truth about philosophy and spirituality.

Philosophy and spirituality, of which you are all students, are to be known, but more than acquiring knowledge, a student of philosophy and spirituality must also try to acquire the practical wisdom of how to fit this newly gained knowledge into his daily life, thoughts, words and actions. In short, "how can I live in the light of this philosophy? how can I base my life upon this philosophy? whatever I have learned in Yoga, how can I turn it into a new form, into my day-to-day life and actions?" This you must know.

Philosophy and Vedanta are both for knowing and for living. If they are only known, you become a *pundit*, a scholar, a professor, a lecturer. You will be highly regarded. You will be able to teach philosophy to others, impart the knowledge of Yoga to others, but you yourself will not be a Yogi, a *sadhak*. For it is whether the philosophy, which has made you a learned

person and *pundit*, is seen to manifest in your everyday life and actions, philosophy in action, philosophy in application—that determines whether or not you can be regarded as a spiritual person.

This is the special difference between secular philosophers, who have learned philosophy in order to become professors, doctors, *pundits*, writers, become world famous, and those who have studied philosophy in order to bring about a transformation in their lives. The latter have studied philosophy, not to know what philosophy has to say, but in order to know how it can “transform my life, bring me from the darkness of ignorance to the light of wisdom; how it can bring me out of *maya*, above *maya*, beyond *maya*; how I can live this philosophy and attain liberation.” Philosophy for him means attainment of liberation; it is not for *prapanca* (worldly life) but for *paramartha* (supreme value).

We all know that philosophy teaches that this is a world of *dvandvas* (pairs of opposites): *sukha*, *duhkha* (pain, pleasure); *harsha*, *soka* (joy, grief); *labha*, *hani* (gain, loss); *jaya*, *parajaya* (victory, defeat). All this we know, but if a good thing happens and we rejoice and its opposite happens and we are shocked, then we are not true philosophers. We have not gained anything from the knowledge that the world consists of *dvandvas*. It is only when this knowledge can bring us a firm abidance in unshaken equanimity, when our consciousness is not assailed by anything, it becomes firmly fixed, unshakable, then you are more than a philosopher, you are a *sthitaprajna* (one who is unshakably established in superconsciousness).

In this way, knowledge of Yoga, knowledge of *dharma*—all these knowledges—if they are merely known, it is better than not knowing them; but if you stop short of living them, then you have committed a great blunder.

We know that this world is made up of three *gunas*—*sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. The Bhagavad Gita says which of them is desirable, which of them should be treated with caution, which of them should be rejected. You know that, and if your life becomes a conscious process of living in such a way as to be constantly engaged in encouraging *sattva*, rejecting *tamas* and being wise and cautious in dealing with your *rajas*, then you are a *sadhak*, you are a Yogi, you are a *jnani*.

Otherwise, even if you know that this world is made up of *trigunatmika maya* (*maya* characterised by the three *gunas*) and that *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* are constantly present in every little thing, if this knowledge is only knowledge in you, if in your daily life there is not the careful selection of *sattva*, the rejection of *tamas* and the careful handling and directing of *rajas*, then you are only a *sushka* (dry, empty) *jnani*, a *sushka* Vedantin.

Your Vedanta will not flower; it will not give fruit. It will not keep on growing; it has no scope for expansion or growth or unfoldment, because it is dry Vedanta, *sushka* Vedanta. And *sushka* Vedanta will soon become a burden; it will cease to benefit you even though you may get admiration from the world. But, does the *sadhak* come into the spiritual life in order to get admiration from the world? Does the *sadhak* study philosophy only in order to know, or is it to understand from that knowledge “how I can live my life in a sublime way, how I can wisely direct my path towards the goal of liberation.”

What is the purpose in knowing? This has to be well thought out. The correct attitude towards all philosophy, all Vedanta, all Yoga has to be cultivated, and it should be constantly, actively applied in daily life.

If we are in an Ashram, we are also in a world, and as anywhere else, the *dvandvas* are here. The three *gunas* are also here. It is up to you how you live in the Ashram. If you

wish to have maximum benefit out of Uttarkhand, Ganges bank, a Guru's teaching, spiritual life, then this process of the selecting and welcoming of *sattva*, the rejecting of *tamas* and the wise handling and channelising of *rajas*, along with constant discrimination between the *dvandvas* must be going on in your life. Then it will yield results.

Now it is up to us, each one of us to ask: "Does this very special quality, does this *sadhana* of enquiry, discrimination, selection, rejection, does it characterise my life here?" If it does, you will know the reason why you have progressed so much. If it does not, you will know the reason for not having progressed so much. The environment, the atmosphere, the surroundings, the set-up are not to blame. If you know whether you are doing this or not, then you will understand why you are progressing or why you are not progressing. You will know where to set your life right. This is a very essential study for all *sadhaks*, Vedantins and Yogis who are earnest seekers, who are *jijnasus*, who have got keen *mumukshutva*.

Yes, Gurudev has done a very special act of grace. Perhaps he knew human tendency. So ninety percent of his spiritual writings and teachings are admonitions: "Do this, do that, think in this way, act in this way, live in this way, engage in Yoga in such and such a way, carry on *sadhana* in this way." He solved the problem directly. He did not merely use *sushka* knowledge. Even while he gave knowledge, he immediately said, "Do it," and showed the way how to do it. He emphasised action, emphasised *kriya*, emphasised actual *abhyasa*. Perhaps that was his greatest gift to the world of *sadhaks* and seekers ! God bless you !

PRACTISE YOUR CONVICTION

Radiant Divinities! We are living in an age where the highest form of knowledge comes to us from all ten directions. There are countless books bringing spiritual, metaphysical, psychic and philosophical wisdom to us. There are countless spiritual organisations, institutions, societies and foundations all over the world. There are any number of new mystical schools, many of them reviving forgotten knowledge. They want to bring out the wisdom, philosophy and system of worship of the Incas, the Aztecs, the American Indians. And great gatherings and so many conferences are held each year. The discussions are tape-recorded and published. There is a great revival everywhere.

All this means that the educated citizen of the modern world has access to immense knowledge, and many a time this knowledge comes to where he is in the form of gift books and other literature. And therefore we know so much. We know that there is a great Reality. We know that It pervades everywhere, It is present everywhere. We know that It indwells our heart. We know so much.

But then, all this knowledge gets stored in the mind, in the intellect. And the person possessing this knowledge, having immense information through so much reading and so much listening, still continues to be in the same state of consciousness as before. Because, this intellectual grasp of certain fundamental great truths, and also an inner conviction based upon the intellectual grasp of these great truths, nevertheless fails to penetrate deeper into the consciousness and fails to manifest itself or produce actual experience of this truth. Everyone knows for example that we are parts of God. God has made us in His image and therefore we are divine, we are immortal Spirit. Everyone is convinced, "Yes, I am divine." But it makes no

difference to our here and now personality. We continue to remain very, very human and all that that implies.

So, therefore, an important question arises. It was put to me by a sincere seeker: “Swamiji, we know so many things, have grasped these things. We are absolutely convinced about these things, yet the actual experience of these things still seems far away. How to bring about this experience? How to make this conviction an experience?”

It is in answer to this question that all the different Yoga systems, all the different systems of *sadhana*, have come into being. The Bhagavad Gita gives not less than sixteen different kinds of *sadhana*. If you leave aside the first two chapters as an introduction and a preparation for *sadhana*, then from the third chapter onwards until the eighteenth, Yoga after Yoga, *sadhana* after *sadhana*, is expounded. And all the various Yoga Sutras, Vedanta Sutras and Bhakti Sutras, they also expound an answer to this question.

We are convinced God is our own. We are convinced we belong to God wholly and solely, we belong to no one else. We are only passers-by here; all connections are temporary. Our connection with God is a permanent, eternal, unchanging connection. We know that. God is our all-in-all. He is our father, mother, friend, relative, wealth, wisdom, everything. This knowledge is there; we are convinced also, we believe it, but we do not experience this fatherhood of God, this motherhood of God—the living experience. What to do?

All the scriptures answer this question. All the lives of saints answer this question. And what is the quintessence of this answer? Whatever your conviction is, commence, start practising the conviction in the form of again and again affirming the truth that you are convinced of, again and again asserting it, again and again dwelling upon it, again and again meditating upon this truth. And time and again as any contrary

state of mind begins to emerge in your interior, any thought that contradicts this, immediately reject it. This is the classical method given by great teachers of Vedanta.

They say it is only by practice of the truth-affirming, asserting, reflecting upon, deeply pondering and meditating upon that truth, trying to listen to it again and again, trying to absorb it even more by study—that it will go deeper. Do it through *satsang*, through *sravana*, through *svadhyaya*, through *manana* and through *nididhyasana*. And if anything of a contrary nature comes into your consciousness, immediately reject it.

Contrary thoughts will keep coming, because they do not come from outside, they are right within us. We have practised error for such a long time, since our birth. We have constantly lived in error and taken that to be the truth. We are groomed, reared up in error. Therefore, you cannot simply transform yourself overnight. The error will keep coming back and, you have to reject it.

So they say: “*satya ka pushtikaran asat ka nirakaran, jnana ka pushtikaran ajnana ka nirakaran; neti, neti* (the strengthening of truth, the rejecting of untruth; the strengthening of wisdom, the rejecting of ignorance; not this, not this).” “This is not right, this is not the correct thing. This is not the truth; I don’t want it.” Reject it, throw it out! And affirm, assert the Reality, the truth. Both of these are simultaneous. Both of these have to go together.

And, add to it deep study of the Goal. Absorb it, think of it constantly and then meditate upon it. “*Tat srotavyo mantavyo nididhyasitavyah* (That should be heard, reflected upon and contemplated).” So Yajnavalkya tells his disciple Maitreyi who was also his wife. On the eve of renouncing the householder status and entering the monastic life, when questioned about the Reality he said: “It is the greatest thing,

dearer than the dearest, nearer than the nearest, the highest of all values, the one supreme thing.” He said: “Yes, this is the Atman. It has to be heard about, it has to be reflected upon, it has to be deeply meditated upon, O Maitreyi.”

He addresses Maitreyi, but actually he tells us this is what has to be done in order for conviction to gradually start developing into a feeling. First of all you experience it as a feeling. Though it may be on your psychical level, yet it is better than mere intellectual conviction. You are one step further. Not only are you convinced about it, you begin to feel it. That means it has started to approach closer to your consciousness. And then this *bhava* (feeling), if it is maintained, if it is brought into your daily life, if it is made to permeate your vision, then gradually this *bhava* begins to ripen into *anubhava* (direct perception).

So it is the result of a continuous, unceasing *abhyasa*, practice of affirming the truth, asserting the truth, reflecting upon it, meditating upon it and rejecting anything contrary to it. Thus, that which is only a conviction on the level of the intellect becomes an experience deep, deep within your innermost centre of consciousness. That is the beginning of liberation. So *abhyasa* is what is indicated and *abhyasa* is to be continuous. *Abhyasa* also includes the rejection of that which is contrary, not in consonance with the truth, with the Reality. Both are necessary.

When it says in the Gita: “You must focus your mind upon that great Reality, O Arjuna, and *kascidanyan na cintayet*—you should not think of anything else,” it means the entire mind should be focused upon the one great object of your meditation, the great Reality, to the exclusion of all other contrary thoughts. No other contrary thoughts should be allowed to enter in, to interfere with the focus. This is the way. And the law behind this practice is: “As a man thinketh, so he

becometh.” “*Mana eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayoh*—The mind alone of man is the main cause of either bondage or liberation.”

So there you have a method given to you. You have your mind, bring it under your control. You have your intellect which is already convinced. Now practise this conviction by affirmation. Assert, affirm, and reject all things that are contrary. Reflect upon it, meditate upon it, listen to it again and again. Read and absorb, take it deeper down. These are all *abhyasas*. It may be any path—*bhakti*, *jnana* or Yoga, any path. Practise this constant affirmation, the assertion of your relationship with God.

“God is my Father, I am the child of God”—this should be practised, this should be affirmed. Any other thing such as: “I belong to so and so, I am the son of this family,” should be rejected. “No, no, this is a false relationship. Any other relationship except with the source of my being, the cosmic origin, source and support of my being, is not authentic, is not genuine. The real, authentic relationship is with that Being alone Who is my Father, Mother, God. Any other relationship is an imagined one.” In that way one should practise.

Even upon the path of *bhakti*, even upon the path of duality, the same process is to be carried on, but modified and suited to that approach—through the heart, through emotion, through sentiment, through love, through devotion. But the technique is the same, the practice is the same, the *sadhana* is the same. “Mere to Giridhara Gopala dusara na koyi (So far as I am concerned, my God is Lord Krishna and nobody else).” That is *bhakti*. That is the same practice applied.

Whatever your path may be, God bless you to practise your conviction, strengthen it, take it ever deeper, and rejecting all that is contrary, may your efforts be crowned with success, with God-experience !

SUPREME GRACE AND SELF-EFFORT: THE LIFE TRIUMPHANT

Worshipful homage unto the supreme, all-pervading Universal Presence, our eternal source, our present, invisible support and our ultimate goal, attaining which our lives become fruitful! Worshipful homage unto that great Reality, that is our true abode now. It always has been and always shall be at all times our *nija dham* (own abode), our *svasthana* (own place) and our *asli ratan* (real wealth). May divine grace which constitutes Its very essence lead us day by day in all that we do as the living of our life!

May divine grace guide your footsteps and lead you on, so that your life becomes a meaningful and gainful process towards the ultimate attainment and experience of that ever-present Divine Essence. It is for this alone that you have been endowed with this most covetable, most invaluable human status. Great is the grace the Universal Spirit has bestowed upon the individual soul by conferring upon it this status which is verily the portal to blessedness, the right royal highway to liberation and divine perfection.

Similarly, great is the grace of the Cosmic Being in coming to us in this life as our worshipful and beloved *guru*, for in the ultimate analysis, the *guru* is grace personified. It is divine grace, it is that Cosmic Being who comes to the seeking soul as the *guru*, as the spiritual preceptor. And thus manifesting grace, It guides us to the Goal. Therefore, it has been said: "*Guru* is Brahma, *guru* is Vishnu, *guru* is Siva, *guru* is the ultimate, transcendental Being, the Absolute Being." Such is the grace indeed that infills each individual human life when the individual has been induced, one way or another, to come into the spiritual path, has become a *mumukshu*. For *mumukshutva* is also a manifestation of grace.

And bringing one into the spiritual path brings the seeking soul into direct spiritual contact with a realised, enlightened, illumined saint and sage. That is the ultimate grace; all that is needful has been done. Now, it is for the seeking soul, the *sadhaka*, the *mumukshu*, the *jijnasu*, the *yogi*, to recognise this grace and to start utilising it. This is, therefore, the point where *purushartha* or *sadhana* becomes the dominating overall factor in one's life.

In various ways this truth has been revealed to us, but nowhere more aptly than in the parable of the twenty golden talents. Before a master goes on a long journey he calls his three servants and says: "I am going away for a long time. To each of you I give twenty golden talents. Use them well." And the master goes. What has to be given has been given. There is nothing lacking; the grace is complete.

It is, therefore, the utilisation of this grace that constitutes the essence of spiritual life. It is recognising the value of that which has been received and putting it to the highest and best use that constitutes *sadhana*. Where grace, its recognition and self-effort coexist, then there is great blessedness, all success, the wealth of wealths, the supreme attainment.

It is this truth that is the declaration of the closing, final verse of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita wisdom teachings—the coexistence of fullest grace and its fullest application through *sadhana* or self-effort. This is the ultimate good and this closing verse of the Gita needs to be pondered upon.

The first chapter of the Gita puts before us the inner situation of the individual soul before the commencement of the spiritual life, a situation of a twofold pull within the heart of the individual in two opposite directions—the divine and the undivine, the spiritual and the unspiritual, the cosmic or supremely transcendental and the merely worldly. There are

these two forces ranging one against the other. That is the situation in the human heart before the spiritual life has commenced, before *sadhana* has stepped into one's life.

But when this situation is resolved in the best manner in a fortunate awakened human being, in the manner most conducive for the highest welfare and blessedness of the individual, there emerges this ultimate state of fullest grace and fullest, ready, willing and sustained self-effort—*param kripa* and *purushartha*. That is the life triumphant.

The confluence, the combination and the dynamic presence of both these factors—divine grace and an awakened and aware self-effort—grace accompanied by self-effort, grace enhanced by self-effort, grace augmented by determined and purposeful effort to see that this grace is not in vain—that grace will bear fruit in the form of highest blessedness.

This is to be reflected upon and to be deeply understood, for all of us are recipients of grace, are beings possessing a great golden wealth. Our lives have been enriched, and the Being who has thus endowed us watches and waits patiently for our response. This response, when it is there, is called spiritual life; it is called *sadhana*, aspiration, *abhyasa*. Call it *yoga*.

Therefore, to all the blessednesses add your own genuine spiritual aspiration, your own devotion and dedication to the ideal of the spiritual life. It is this bringing unto the grace and blessings that we have received our earnestness, our sincerity, our effort, that brings about enlightenment. This is the simple truth provided that it is done every day, provided it is persevered in, provided it is continuous, as continuous as divine grace and the *guru's* blessings.

This is the condition, this is the need from our side—this constant affirmation, confirming our dedication to the

spiritual life. It has to be daily and always there, constant and continuous. Then we see the miracle. Then there is nothing that can stop you.

Thus it has been with all spiritual giants past and present, the globe over. They never gave up. They again and again affirmed their devotion and firm abidance in their ideal. This is the one thing needful: a genuine longing, a sincere, earnest yearning that is affirmed each day and that is kept up, persevered in, continuously and ceaselessly. Then miracles can take place.

The call has come into your life. The hand has been stretched out towards you. Grasp it, respond, and become blessed. This verily is the essence of your life here as a *sadhaka*, *jijnasu* and a *mumukshu*. Your supreme blessedness lies in the extent to which and the manner in which you answer the call, grasp His hand and rise to the occasion. Never cease, but always strive until this supreme blessedness is attained, not in the hereafter, but here and now !

BE YOUR OWN SAVIOUR, SAYS LORD KRISHNA

Radiant Immortal Atman! Blessed and beloved children of the Lord! The Gita contains the quintessence of our scriptures and spiritual lores. If you know the Gita thoroughly and if you have studied it with a deeper perception, then there is no need of studying any other scripture, because the practical spiritual wisdom of all the scriptures is put into the Srimad Bhagavad Gita. Scholars are in a habit of saying that every Sloka is all important. Not a single Sloka is there which is not of a specific purpose. And some scholars have studied and made research in such a way that you cannot alter any one verse. If a certain word is used with a certain specific purpose, why has it been used and not another word? Because in Sanskrit sometimes the same meaning can be brought out by half a dozen different words. If you ask why another substitute or another alternative was not used in place of this word, they say there is a specific reason.

After thorough study we begin to realise the implication of each word. Yesterday I centred my talk around the verse "*Anityamasukham lokam imam prapya bhajasva mam*—having come into this temporary world which is full of sorrow, unreal happiness and unreal joy, worship Me". That is the way of going beyond all sorrow, transcending pain and suffering and entering into the state of true bliss. That is why He stated the nature of life on this earth and simultaneously stated the way out of it and to go beyond. "*Anityam asukham*" describes the nature of the world. "*Imam prapya bhajasva mam*" tells the method to liberate yourself from this imperfect experience of the world.

Today I wish to draw your attention to another such very categorical injunction of the great World Teacher: "*Uddharet atmanatmanam*". In one context He says to Arjuna,

"O Arjuna, this Self should be saved by the Self alone. You have to save yourself. You are your own saviour." You know our very orthodox Christian brothers, specially German Catholics; they have this as one of their cardinal doctrines that there is only one saviour, that through Jesus Christ only one can be saved, never through anyone else.

So, does this contradict that saying when He says that you have to save yourself by yourself? It does not contradict. We also know that only the grace of God can liberate a person. They use the word Jesus and we use the word grace of God. Ultimately it is the same. Whole of Ramanuja's philosophy is built upon this doctrine of Prapatti. Prapatti means the absolute surrender to the Divine by which alone one can be saved. Unless there is an absolute surrender, you cannot be saved. Yet, unless the individual himself makes the necessary efforts to accept his sins and determines to turn away from sins, repent for what he has done before and then appeal to Jesus and accept him as his personal saviour, "Come please, I accept you as my personal saviour, come and save me from sins". Unless he does it, even Jesus does not save him. So repent for your sins. Then He will call "Come unto Me. Through Me alone you can reach the Father." The first step has to be on the side of the individual. "I shall repent for the sins I have committed. I shall sin no more." "You alone can save me. I accept you as my personal saviour." This Jesus will not do for him. This is something which the individual has to do. When we accept that the Divine Law, the grace, is the only factor that can save us, yet to qualify for that saving one must accept the Lord as his only Saviour, one must take the step, one must repent for what he has done and one must determine never to lead that type of life again. All these steps, repentance, turning away from old type of living, wanting to be saved and then accepting the Lord as the Saviour, these

are the steps which one has to take for oneself.

Supposing there is a drowning person. A shipwreck has happened in an ocean, fifty or hundred people are struggling for life and some other ship comes by and then they throw life-lines. But it is the man struggling in the water who must catch hold of the life-line. Though life-line is there, unless you make the effort to go and catch hold of it, they cannot take you out of the water. Even in this absolute state of helplessness self-help is the ultimate factor that will decide whether you will drown or whether you will survive. So it is this significance that you must understand from this injunction of the Lord: "*Uddharet atmanatmanam*". This is fully compatible with the doctrine of grace. Grace showers upon that being who craves for grace. Calling for grace means one who is completely averse to and disgusted with the life that he has been leading. Though once upon a time he enjoyed it with full gusto, now an awakening has come, a realisation has come, "What have I been doing? What a great horrible life I have been leading? What a fool I have been all these days. Never shall I repeat this kind of thing again." So he must have felt this disgust, he must have recognised the wrongness of his ways, he must have felt deep disgust with himself and a desire to become something which we cannot do for him. If you are hungry your mother can prepare food and put before you. She cannot eat it and appease your hunger. By doctor taking the medicine the patient will not be cured. The patient has to take the medicine to cure himself. They say that even if the best intensive care is given to a patient in a first rate hospital, if he has lost the desire to live, he cannot be revived. He will not survive, he will die, if he has lost the will to live. So there must be a cooperation on the part of the patient. He must want to live and not die. Then anything is possible. So the Lord says, "*Uddharet atmanatmanam*"-the Self must be saved

by the Self itself, which means the lower self which is caught in ignorance, Ajnana, delusion, Maya and, therefore, bound, has to make its own efforts to break through this cage of Ajnana, come out of darkness into light. And one must somehow remove the cobwebs of illusion and start to discriminate and have right perception, right thought, right enquiry, right discrimination. This is what is called Abhyasa. Lord Krishna says that through Abhyasa one can overcome all conditioning. One must, therefore, persist in doing the right type of exertion. Abhyasa means continuous perseverance, persistent effort, without giving, without accepting defeat. "I may succeed; I can succeed; I will succeed." Like this, go on making persistent effort. If that is done, there is nothing that cannot be achieved. There is a very interesting saying in Hindi in Northern India "*Karata karata abhyasake jadamati hota sujan*", by constantly making effort even a dull person becomes wise. There is also another example of granite stone. In some of the villages of India there are wells where by the use of granite stone the villagers draw water using coconut-fibre rope. If the well is two or three feet, over that they put granite slab. And the lady puts one of her legs on the slab and then draws water. And so coming and going, this coconut-fibre rope rubs against the granite. And it is a wonder, if you see in old village wells, you will find that all along on all four sides of this granite stone grooves have been cut. You will make semi-circular grooves. How? What is granite and what is coconut-fibre rope? The sheer persistent rubbing of the rope against the granite gradually wears down the granite particles and brings about a complete groove, as thick as a rope, "*Ardhachandrakara*", half-moon shaped groove will be there. "*Avata javata rasari sila par karat nishan*", the coming and going of the rope makes it mark upon the granite, by the power of persistent application. So man becomes divine if he persists

in his effort without giving up. This is the very essence of Abhyasa. And so the Lord says that one should practise this Abhyasa. The results will come automatically by themselves.

You all know King Bruce of Scotland flung himself down in a lonely mood to think. It is true that he was a king and wore a crown but his heart was beginning to sink! He was about to despair. He had run away after defeat in a battle, took shelter in a forest cave, hiding. He was very very lonely and dejected, depressed and hopeless. As he was gloomily looking in this state of despair, what happened, a spider fell down from the ceiling. You know what these spiders do while falling. They invisibly bring a thread while falling. We think they are simply falling. But you will find them climbing up. When it was falling already it has let a strand of their web. So it went up immediately as it came down. This man was fascinated at this scene. When the spider was about to reach the ceiling, it had climbed off the distance it fell down. Now this man became really interested. He forgot his sorrows and dejections. He wanted to know what the spider would do. It went up and fell again. Once it fell, again it went; second time it fell, again it went up; third it fell, again it went up. This went on happening once, twice, thrice, four times, five times, six times, seven times, eight times. This man was all attention. Ultimately that creature went up for the ninth time and joined the roof. This man thought, "What a fool I am. If this creature is so very persistent, am I to despair? No." From the observation of that spider at once his mood was changed. "I won't give up", he said. The spider inspired him. "Try, try and try again, you will succeed". Then he came out of the cave and went on trying, and then won back his kingdom, King Bruce of Scotland. In this way you should do Abhyasa. One must depend upon oneself. And one must draw inspiration from all things.

Gurudev used to say, "Guru can show you the way.

Guru can inspire you. Guru can try to give you a little bit of enthusiasm and courage. But you will have to keep your feet yourself on every rung of the spiritual ladder. Guru cannot do Sadhana for you. Sadhana is Sadhaka's business."

This spiritual life, attainment of supreme Bliss, is a matter of sincere persistent effort, persevering effort. This is the meaning of the verse "*Uddhwret atmanatmanam*". The lower self with its delusion, with its ignorance, with its darkness, attachments and bondage should be lifted up, to the awakened intellect, the Buddhi, i.e., the higher Self. Later on the spiritual consciousness itself becomes the great power that lifts you up. But until that spiritual consciousness is awakened it is the discriminating intellect, intellect that has become inspired by idealism, is the great factor. Always this intellect should be allowed to predominate, that should be allowed to prevail. And this awakened intellect should be allowed to guide us and it should be inspired by Svadhyaya, going to saints, listening to their inspired instructions and advice. In this way the intellect becomes more and more strengthened in its great desire to become ideal. And so through Svadhyaya, through Satsanga, through Sravana, through inspiring talks, one must draw inspiration and strength. And such an intellect becomes the friend of the Sadhaka. It becomes the purified intellect. We call it Suddha Buddhi, Vivekatmaka Buddhi, the Buddhi that is now qualified by discrimination, spiritual discrimination. And this purified Buddhi becomes the uplifting factor within our own Antahkarana, the lower mind, which is running after sense-objects and the delusion should be lifted up by the higher mind, that is the Buddhi, which has been purified by discrimination and higher spiritual qualities. Thus you have to be your own saviour. This is the clear instruction of Lord Krishna.

Be up and doing, be full of self-confidence, be serene.

"With the help of God I can achieve anything." Self-confidence should not take the form of pride or arrogance "I can achieve anything but with the help of God." That robust self-confidence only made Lord Hanuman to cross the ocean. But he did not arrogate this success to himself. He said, "With the power of Ram Nam what can I not do?" So his self-confidence as spiritual confidence which was based upon absolute faith and trust in the Divine Name. So one should have this sort of self-confidence, not egoism. So with boldness, self-confidence and absolute trust in the Divine Power one should exert in the right direction. Also the Lord says, "The uncontrolled self of the seeker is his own greatest enemy and the controlled self becomes his own greatest friend." If you have to raise yourself by your own Self you must have self-control, you must be a Samyami, you must have control over your senses, you must conquer impure desires. Then you will be able to uplift yourself by your own self. If you are a slave to your senses and completely in the hands of them, a puppet in the hands of desires and cravings of the mind, then this injunction cannot be fulfilled. You cannot lift yourself. On the contrary you will be the person who drags yourself down. One must understand the injunction properly. And one must know what are the necessary things in order that one may become one's own saviour. If you want to uplift yourself by yourself, then be a Samyami, control your senses and earnestly try to overcome the cravings and desires of the mind. For this you must also practise self-punishment. If you are something, if you have taken up a resolution and if you fail in it, that day someone else is not going to punish you. Because you are going to be your own saviour. Say "I won't take food tonight because I have failed in my practice." Four or five times if you do like that, the mind will be careful, because it does not want to miss the food! You must mean business with it. When you do

that it will gradually know what its place is and it will learn the lesson. This self-punishment campaign was something which Sri Gurudev liked very much.

Of course, he learnt it from Mahatma Gandhi who used to do self-examination and also self-punishment. So Gurudev has incorporated self-punishment as one of the items in Spiritual Diary. You will find in it, "How many times you failed in keeping up your resolves? How many times you failed in controlling the senses? How many times you gave away to anger? And then with what self-punishment?" Various are the methods of self-punishment. You can stand on one leg in the centre of the garden and do fifty Malas of Japa, that is one way. Not taking food is another way. And more difficult way of self-punishment is not to touch salt for one week. It is terrible to the mind. But it is a real spiritual discipline. Because it is part of this process of uplifting yourself by your own self. These are all the methods that have to be adopted. These all go to give you success in fulfilling the injunctions and instructions of Lord Sri Krishna, "*Uddharet atmanatmanam*". Hari Om Tat Sat.

AN AWAKENING MUST BE FOLLOWED BY PURPOSEFUL ACTION

Homage unto the all-pervading Cosmic Being, the Universal Spirit, *visvatma*, the Eternal Reality! And worshipful adorations to Gurudev, that very Cosmic Being manifest as a world awakener, a world spiritual teacher and a path-pointer!

A *guru* is a *guru* because he brings into our life the light of wisdom, an awakening impulse. He points out to us the path that leads to life's fulfilment—to *the jivatma* attaining *paramatma*. He points out the means and the methods, the direction and the path. He awakens *the jivatma* from the slumber of Self-forgetfulness, the slumber of ignorance, *ajnana*, the slumber of *avidya*, *dehadhyasa* (identification with the body).

The *guru* is not only an awakener, he inspires us to make use of our wakefulness in purposeful action. If one who is awakened from his Self-forgetfulness, his ignorance of his destiny, does not engage in purposeful and proper action, does not put this wakefulness to highest use, the awakening, though better than slumber, proves infertile, proves fruitless. Therefore, the ending note of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, the most important utterance of Arjuna, is: "*karishye*—I shall act, I shall do." Arjuna, who said, "No, I shall not do, I shall not fight," in the beginning, ends up by saying: "I shall do Your bidding." It is almost an answer to the Upanishadic call of *uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise become enlightened). The fallen Arjuna is now not only awakened from his ignorance but he stands up ready to fight.

Wakefulness with action is called *sadhana*. It is called *abhyasa*. *Yoga* is primarily engaging in a self-determined and self-directed activity which propels the *jiva* ever higher, upward

and Godward, towards God-realisation—thus the significant term *yoga-abhyasa*.

The *guru*, therefore, is an awakener and an inspirer. He is a path—a *pradarsaka*—he is one who throws light upon the path, who shows the path. But the treading of the path must be determinedly undertaken and engaged in by the fortunate disciple. Discipleship is in obedience and in action, in being and doing. "Be what I want you to be. Do what I want you to do." Thus says the *guru*.

All *yoga* is, therefore, the response of the seeking soul, the *sadhaka*, the *jijnasu*, to the call of the *guru*, in the same manner as Arjuna responded by *karishye* (I will do), and followed it up by standing and picking up the bow once again in his hand. Thus he engaged in the action that was called for at that time and attained victory in the war. Eighteen days of ceaseless activity brought about victory.

Therefore, diligently the sincere seeking soul must engage in spiritual *sadhana*, knowing that the source of all power and energy is God Himself. "Thy will be done, and let me have the insight and the power to engage in action for the due fulfilment of Thy will." Even so, the disciple should engage in spiritual *sadhana*, but without a sense of *abhimana*, ego. "Yes, even this I am enabled to do by Your supreme mercy and grace. *Naham karta harih karta tvatpuja karma chakhilam* (I am not the doer; Lord Hari is the doer. All work is Thy worship)."

A mother, with great love, prepares food for her slumbering child. She wakes it up, places the food before the child and urges it to eat. But the eating has to be done by the child. There is an old saying: "Two men can take a horse to a river, but twenty men cannot make it drink." That has to be done by the horse.

Therefore, *sadhana* is the hallmark of the *sadhaka*;

yoga-abhyasa is the hallmark of the *yogi*; prayer, worship, is the hallmark of the devotion of the devotee. Discipline, self-control, ceaseless effort to ingather the mind and to check its wandering, to centralise it, to focus it towards the great ideal—this is the hallmark of the *dhyani yogi*. Worshipfully engaging in one's duties and activities, remembering the Divine Being throughout the activity itself, in the midst of the activity, and offering up the activity at the feet of the supreme, ever-present Reality is the hallmark of a true *karma yogi*.

Thus, in the ultimate context, all spiritual life, all *yoga*, all *sadhana* is the devout engaging in the right and appropriate kind of spiritual activity by the seeker, the *sadhaka*, the *yogi*, the devotee. It is, therefore, upon this plane of action and reaction, action and the fruit of action, this outer plane, that the law is fulfilled. Significantly, in the Gita, the Lord says that whether you wish it or not, the Cosmic Nature, which resides in you as your own human nature with its outgoing tendency of the mind, will impel you, compel you, oblige you, to engage in numerous and various activities. When this is inevitable, why not be wise and direct it towards your divine destiny? Why not be wise and spiritualise it? Why not be wise and make it a means of connecting yourself with the Divine, linking yourself with the cosmic source of your being? Why not be wise?

Such wisdom in action is called *yoga*—*yogah karmasu kausalam*. “If I have to engage in action, let me not be foolish and make it my problem. Let me not allow it to take me into further bondage, greater Self-forgetfulness. Let me not allow action to be a breaking up of my connection with the Divine. On the contrary, let me be wise, let me have wakefulness and an inner awareness, so that my activity is done with an attitude and an approach that makes it a means of moving towards the Goal.”

Thus acting, the actor becomes not merely a *karma yogi*, he also becomes a *jnani yogi*. Action is based on wisdom, infilled with *jnana*. And he desires to elevate his activity to such sublime heights because of his great desire, his love for attaining the Lord. There is in it a keen longing to obtain the Supreme. There is *bhakti*. *Bhakti* and *jnana* automatically become the moving forces infilling all activity.

So, the true *yogi* cannot help being a *jnani*, a *bhakta*, a *yogi* even in the midst of activity. Therefore, the activity of people who have adopted the spiritual life, who have entered the path of *yoga*, who are engaged in *sadhana*, is not the mere activity of the man of the world, the bound soul who is in love with the world and its things—a *samsari*—one who is impelled by desire, by attachment, by craving, the urge to taste the transitory pleasures of the petty objects of this universe. That action leads to greater darkness and bondage. The activity of one who is awakened, one who is wise, is a spiritual activity in every sense of the term, in which the ingredients constitute *jnana*, *bhakti*, *yoga*, and it is filled with *vairagya*, dispassion.

It is a totally different kind of activity: a liberating activity, a spiritual activity, a God-oriented activity, a wisdom-based activity, an activity at the centre of which there is wakefulness, an awareness, and a lofty and sublime purpose. So, the inner *svarupa* of this activity is purely spiritual; it is *yogic*. This is the inner content of those who have adopted the life spiritual, who have entered into the path of *yoga*, who are engaging themselves in spiritual *sadhana*.

Therefore, may your life be a confluence of *bhakti*, *jnana* and *yoga*, and may all your activity be a *sadhana* for God-realisation. May it be God-oriented, directed towards the supreme Goal, thus helping you to connect yourself with God at every step, at every moment. May the grace of the Divine

and the choicest blessings of the Holy Master enable you to understand this aspect of your life, to reflect upon it and to elevate your so-called ordinary day-to-day life to a lofty height of higher awareness, purposefulness and direction.

Thus may all of your life be to you a fulfilment of this central aspiration—not part of your life, but all of your life. May your entire life be a divine life.

Towards this end, strive with diligence and wisdom, unaffected by the outer factors that constitute the passing scene around you. That will continue to be what it is. The transformation is within yourself. You cannot change the outer world, but there is every need for you to be a changed being inwardly. That is the secret of a successful spiritual life.

SADHANA MEANS ACTIVE EFFORT

All of you are proceeding towards a definite goal. What does this proceeding towards a definite goal mean? What should it mean to you, imply to you? And in what way should it manifest in your thought, word and deed?

What should *sadhana* mean to you? How should this *sadhana* manifest in your life, in your thoughts, words and deeds? If spiritual life is the supreme ideal and if *yoga* *sadhana* is engaged in, in order to reach the goal, the *lakshya* of *yoga*, then what should *sadhana* mean, what should the life of *yoga* and *yoga abhyasa* mean to you, imply to you? For unless you know what *sadhana*, *yoga* and *yoga abhyasa* should mean to you, imply to you, and how they should manifest in your life, how can you engage in true *sadhana* or *yoga abhyasa* ? It cannot be effective.

Do our scriptures throw any light upon this very important and vital question? Yes, they do, and not in some hidden, occult sense, some esoteric sense which will have to be expounded by subtle thinkers and great philosophers trying to make meaning out of very subtle, mystical and ambiguous truths uttered in a high-flown way. Rather, scriptures do have something to say about this vital question—directly, plainly, categorically, unambiguously, unmistakably. What is it?

Rama had a goal: He wanted to bring Sita back. Ravana also had a goal: he wanted to keep Sita. Ravana did not want to give Sita to Rama even though people like his brother Vibhishana and even Mandodari, his wife, persuaded, begged, prayed and advised him to do so. And so, Ravana, in order to achieve his goal, fought in as many ways as it is possible to fight. And Rama, to attain His goal, also engaged in battle—He fought. They did not lie down in an easy chair and ask

someone else to do something for them. They went themselves. They asked the help of people. They consulted others. They gathered armies. They did all that was necessary to do, at least within the limits of their knowledge. To use an English expression: they left no stone unturned.

What to say of superior human beings like Prince Rama, a scion of the royal family, even animals—monkeys and bears—also tried their best to do everything. When they were helpless, they consulted each other: “What should we do now?” They sat down, put their heads together, thought about it and tried to see what they could do. So they also exercised their intelligence. They did not sit back.

When they had done all that they could, their very best, and could not go further, even then they did not give up. They further enquired, reflected. Why? Because of their sincerity. They wanted to do it—really, truly, genuinely, authentically—and, therefore, they did everything they could. They exercised their strength and they fought. They did not simply allow the opposition to overcome them, saying, “What to do? Fate.” No! “If there is opposition,” they said, “we have to overcome. We must use our strength. We must be active. We must be dynamic. We must do something about it.” Doing is *sadhana*. Be up and doing!

For the past four days, you have been hearing the Devi Mahatmyam being read. Devi is a great Being, *parabrahman sakti*. By simply thinking, by *humkara*, She had the power to destroy all Her enemies. She could do that; but no, She used all the weapons, not one weapon, but many kinds of weapons. And She also fought. That means She was vigorously active in trying to overcome the opposition and reach the goal.

When the *devas* fought and failed, they took recourse to a higher power. They went and prayed: “Pease help us.

We are not able. Come to our aid. Fight on our behalf.”

Sarva-mangala-mangalye sive sarvartha-sadhike,
Saranye triyambake gauri narayani namostute.
Srishti-sthiti-vinasanam saktibhute sanatani,
Gunasraye gunamaye narayani namostute.
Saranagatadinarta paritrana parayane,
Sarvesyartihare devi narayani namostute.

(“Salutation be to You, O Narayani, O You who are the good of all good, O auspicious Devi, who accomplish every object, the giver of refuge, O three-eyed Gauri!

“Salutation be to You, O Narayani, You who have the power of creation, sustenance and destruction and are eternal. You are the substratum and embodiment of the three *gunas*.

“Salutation be to You, O Narayani, O You who are intent on saving the dejected and distressed that take refuge under You. O You, Devi who remove the sufferings of all!”)

Within these three *slokas* they took shelter. She is the shelter— *saranagata dinarta paritrana parayani*. She helps those who take recourse to Her. If you do not take recourse, She is where She is, She is what She is, and you remain where you are. It is only when you take recourse, She says: “OK, you are asking Me, I will do what you ask. I will come to your rescue.” So, even there activity is necessary. You must actively go and seek the aid of the Divine, within and without, in all Its manifestations.

It is this that constitutes *sadhana*, this active effort to overcome obstructions, to progress along the path and reach the Goal. *Yoga abhyasa* means active effort to obtain the *lakshya*, to reach the Goal. *Sadhana* means active effort to obtain that which is possible of being obtained through effort. So, it means continuous effort in the right direction. And it means a willingness to keep up this continuous effort. It means, not a negative unproductive attitude of approach, but a positive, ever-

willing attitude of engaging in active effort.

What will be the form of the active effort? The form will be that which is right and suitable for overcoming that which opposes, that which is suitable for achieving the Goal, that which takes you nearer and nearer in the direction you wish to move. It will be that which is intelligently chosen, which is through and through common sense. You must use common sense. God has given you intelligence. You must apply both your intelligence and common sense and be thus actively engaged in moving towards the Goal.

This active effort is the essence of *sadhana* and it should be throughout. *Sadhana* means active effort. *Yoga abhyasa* means active effort. It may be mental effort. It may be verbal effort. It may be physical effort. It may be all three combined. It may be a fourth kind of effort which is not covered by mental, physical and verbal effort. But it is all effort.

If you want to do some silly thing such as indulging in some pleasure, how much effort you will do, how much you will weigh the pros and cons to discover how somehow or other you may be able to satisfy your senses and please your mind. All night and day you engage in doing it. The same thing should be applied in the direction of *yoga*.

But, if on the contrary you are only engaged in actively seeking sense pleasures, in satisfying yourself, in hunting for selfish fulfilment, then active effort will be present, but it will be in the wrong direction. It will not produce any concentration or ecstasy or higher consciousness. It will not, because it is being done in a wrong direction.

So, the effort must be in the right direction. And it should not be accompanied by self-sabotage. It should not be accompanied by working against yourself in another direction. If in one area you are vigorously working for yourself in the right direction but in another area you go on working in the

opposite direction, then naturally your right effort will be unproductive, because you are undoing what you are trying to do.

Therefore, active effort should be accompanied by earnestness and sincerity. It should be accompanied by common sense and ordinary intelligence—not extraordinary intelligence which is not in the possession of all people. We take the normal human being; a *sadhaka* is a normal person.

And from where one is one starts, for that is one's equipment at that point in time. Therefore, with common sense, enquiry and reflection and with whatever intelligence God has endowed you with, intelligently make active effort to overcome that which stands in the path, within and without, and move steadily towards the Goal.

This is what all scriptures show. Rama exercised this active effort, and He also fought a battle. Devi also keeps on fighting battle after battle. The Mahabharata shows the same thing, the exercise of active effort. You have to overcome that which is contrary to your ideal and goal. And you must keep on, keep on and not get disheartened, not get frustrated. There were times when even Lord Rama got a little perturbed because everything He used against Ravana proved of no avail. Then a sage comes and tells Him: "No, no, no, this is not the way. Come along, buck up!" Then he gives Him a little help. That means that the emphasis is always upon the positive.

Gurudev was very fond of the Latin expression *nil desperandum*. Many times he used to say, "Do not despair." For where there is despair, there is no hope. Interestingly enough, the three great cardinal virtues within the Christian theological context are faith, hope and charity. Much emphasis is put upon hope and you know what the reason is. Hope is necessary, because the spiritual life, *sadhana* and *yoga abhyasa* are not easy. It is not as if you can just put a coin in

a slot machine and out comes a fruit. It is not like that. There is no assurance of quick results and fruits. Ultimate fruits are what we are aiming at, not immediate successes. If we keep on our effort, then the ultimate fruit is assured.

This is the truth that scriptures try to draw our attention to in respect to our spiritual life. This is what scriptures, in their very clear and unmistakable way, say. Not in any subtle, hidden, occult and esoteric way but plainly, calling a spade a spade. They put before us this plain fact, the plain truth: We have to keep on making effort. *Sadhana*, *yoga abhyasa*, spiritual life, means using common sense, intelligence and keeping up effort to reach the goal which we have set for ourselves. Every scripture we touch has this common universal message even though they may vary in certain details. The basic central message is plain for anyone to see.

If we can see this basic, central message, accept it, apply it, and thus engage in *sadhana* with common sense and intelligence, then victory will be ours, because it heads towards victory.

In the big North Indian cities, these ten days will end in the day of victory. Rama becomes the victor; His efforts give Him fruit. Similarly, after nine days of worship, the tenth day is celebrated as the great victory of the Divine Mother over all that opposes Her. *Vijaya*, the name itself is significant. People greet each other; they exchange greeting cards. Why? It is rejoicing at the victory. The great experience of victory is the assured culmination. You are meant for it.

Sadhana, therefore, means victory. *Yoga abhyasa* means victory ultimately. Spiritual life means victory ultimately. God bless you with such a victory! May the Divine Mother give you the intelligence, the common sense and the effort to attain this victory!"

DEVELOPING A LONGING FOR GOD

Worshipful homage unto the omnipresent Divine from whom we are never apart, in whom we dwell and who dwells within us as the very life of our life, the eye of our eye, the ear of our ear, the breath of our breath, the *prana* of our *prana*, the mind of our mind, the very heart of our heart, the innermost essence of our being!

"*Eko devah sarvabhuteshu gudhah...*" "*Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese'juna tishthati...*" — The Supreme Spirit is hidden in all beings. The Lord, Isvara, dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna. Thus, variously, the scriptures again and again bring to our attention this truth, this fact, that we are never apart from, we are never in any way remote, distant or disconnected from, the Being whom we are seeking, the Being whom we refer to as *the parama lakshya*, highest goal, of human existence.

When we say *parama*, highest or supreme, we always think of it as something beyond, something distant or remote, something that requires a long journey to reach. We always think in terms of a long process, but they point out to us that it is an inner journey. We do not have to cover distances. We only have to remove obstacles—formidable obstacles within ourselves—the greatest obstacle being ourselves. And, metaphysically speaking, the lesser obstacles are certain factors within our own personality that are contrary to the Divine Reality, which, therefore, veil It. They stand in the way, they obscure It; they obstruct our perception of It, our experience of It.

Also, the inveterate tendency of our psychological self is to always move away from the inner centre and move outside to external objects, propelled by the desire for the possession and enjoyment of external things. It is the tendency of the mind to imagine that happiness, peace and the fulfilment

of our lives lies in striving for, possessing and experiencing external things, and thus it moves outward in the wrong direction due to this wrong notion. Therefore, the most familiar, the most intimate appears to be remote. Not that it is, but we make it so.

To alter these outgoing tendencies—this deluded thinking of the mind that our happiness is in worldly possessions, contacts, and experiences—becomes an indispensable part of our *sadhana*. And it is an extraordinary quality of this delusion that it doesn't allow the deluded being to perceive that he is deluded. On the contrary, he will argue and fight and try to convince others that he is perfectly clear, rational and logical.

So, all the world is in the grip of this delusion that does not permit them to know their delusion; on the contrary, makes them convinced that they are right and that those who do not think like them are deluded. Thus it is that this *bhranti*, this delusion, being created by *maya* makes the being move in a direction contrary to his ultimate goal which is within. It is through *satsanga* and *svadhyaya* that this delusion is removed and ignorance is replaced by right understanding and knowledge. That marks the turning of our direction towards God.

We must come to the conviction, the continuous, unalterable conviction that God is present right here, nearest to me as my innermost being. God lives within me; we are never apart. And the next conviction is to know that this Being is the only source of true happiness, peace and satisfaction. There is no other source.

The third conviction is that this Being, who is ultimately the only source of true happiness, is, therefore, the highest value in life. There is nothing greater, nothing more valuable, nothing more important.

If we make seeking Him our most important task in life,

if we develop for Him a great longing, a great desire and an overwhelming yearning: "In this life, before I pass away, I must attain God, I must experience that Supreme Being, I must," if our whole being becomes filled with this urge, then there is absolutely no doubt, it is absolutely certain, that in this very life, in and through this very body, God will be experienced. There is no room for doubt or despair.

No matter how deluded the world outside may be, no matter how chaotic and absurd, no matter how outrageously human society in this world may be acting, it does not matter if your interior is all right. And it is in the firm conviction of God's existence and in His most intimate and nearest presence, plus a great conviction that He is the one and only supreme value, the one and only thing worth attaining that you develop within you a great longing to attain and experience God; in fact you become of the nature of God.

Then you may be absolutely certain that nothing can deprive you of that experience. It may be a question of a little sooner or later, but the experience is certain. There is no doubt about it.

Let us, therefore, adore the Supreme by acknowledging His immediate, indwelling presence and by telling Him: "Thou art my all in all. Thou art everything for me. Thy attainment is my life's only desire."

SUSTAINED ENTHUSIASM

Worshipful homage unto the eternal, infinite, all-pervading, supreme, non-dual Reality, the one alone that exists and whose existence manifests as existence in all things that exist.

The ocean exists. Therefore, waves exist. If there were no ocean, there would be no waves. The central orb of the solar radiance exists, and billions of rays radiate in all directions. If the sun did not exist, there would be no light. There would not be one single ray in this universe of ours. Even so, the existence of all things that exist cannot be separated, cannot even be conceived of, as distinct and separate from the one, ultimate, supreme, non-dual source of all existence, that which is Existence Absolute, *sat*.

Thus, all existence owes its existence to that supreme *sat*, to that Supreme Being, to that One alone that exists eternally, beginninglessly, endlessly. To that Supreme Existence which is the beginning, middle and end, the alpha and omega of all that exists, our worshipful homage!

Loving adorations to the spiritual presence of worshipful and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji, who thought it fit to impart such insights to sincere seeking souls, to *sadhakas* with *jijnasa* (the desire to know), to *sadhakas* with *grahanasilata*, the willingness and readiness to receive. For this is essential: the willingness to approach, the willingness to ask for knowledge, and the willingness to receive.

Ask, and it will be given you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and it will be opened to you. So, this is the condition preceding any achievement. There should be eagerness to receive. There should be desire to know. There should be willingness to fulfil all conditions, so that it may be bestowed

and so that it may be received. This is the essence of the quest and its successful, fruitful culmination—a continuous eagerness to obtain, and a great willingness to fulfil the conditions so that it may be bestowed. Plus, the patience to work for it and to bide one's time.

Therefore a *sadhaka* is called a *jijnasu*; he has a keen desire for knowledge. There should be this thirst; there should be this longing. There should be this continuous, keen eagerness to know and to proceed towards the state of illumination, of enlightenment. In other words, to go on fulfilling all the minimal conditions that are essential for being a ripe receptacle. They say that you must be an *adhikari*, you must be a deserving one.

And if one is to keep up this longing, this keenness, this eagerness, one must have sustained enthusiasm. If you allow your interest to flag, enthusiasm will wane, and you will be in danger. Otherwise, where there is this keen enthusiasm and there is keen interest and eagerness, that itself is an armour, that itself is a power generator that can confront anything, overcome anything, ward off anything.

Therefore it is that a genuine, authentic positivism is an indispensable requisite of successful spiritual striving and ultimate attainment—a keen positivism that looks at the positive aspects of things and exults that God has been so gracious, that rejoicingly moves forward with enthusiasm, with interest, with eagerness, longing for nothing else, wishing for nothing else, caring for nothing else, and paying attention to nothing else but this central quest.

This indeed is the sure guarantor, that which ensures the successful culmination of the spiritual quest, the successful fruition of spiritual *sadhana*, the successful attainment of enlightenment and illumination. Be this so in the life of each and everyone of you !

TODAY MOVE ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

What one ardently aspires after, what one has one's heart and mind set upon, and for achieving which one lives, breathes, strives, thinks and feels—if thus one's entire life means a calm but a firm and determined movement towards the supreme goal that one wants to achieve; if the attainment of that goal is the paramount value in life; if, more than anything else, the entire love of one's heart is set upon that goal; if day and night one's mind is ever engaged in finding ways and means of drawing nearer and nearer to that goal—then nothing in this world can stop us from moving towards that goal and ultimately reaching it, provided that while we are moving in that direction, we are always vigilant and careful to see that no part of us moves in a contrary direction.

There is a very descriptive expression in the English language: “back to square one.” It comes from a game, and means that after having made a lot of effort and progress, if you suddenly make a wrong move, then you find yourself right back at the beginning—back to square one.

In several mountain areas of India, the means of transportation is by a very narrow gauge railway. And the interesting feature about this railway is that on the steep inclines there is a third rail between the normal ones which is notched with a series of teeth—cogs. Each car also has a third wheel with similar cogs. On steep inclines, where the train might slip backwards, the third wheel is let down in order to catch hold of and grip the central rail. It is designed to prevent any possibility of the train backsliding.

Now you have a clear idea of what you must do. Not only should you strive to move towards the Goal, but, simultaneously, you must also have a mechanism within your own psyche. It should be a device wisely formulated by you through

your own wisdom, common sense and intelligence, by drawing guidance from all sources of wisdom such as *svadhyaya*, *satsanga* and listening to elders, through reflection, discrimination and enquiry. You make a device so that as you are progressing and moving towards the Goal, you ensure that there is no possibility of sliding back, what to say of back to square one. Back to square one is eliminated altogether. It is impossible. On the contrary, you ensure yourself against even a little reversal, a little backsliding.

It should all be onward, upward, goalward, Godward, with no possibility of deviation, no possibility of derailment, no possibility of slipping down even one little bit. That is why the Lord said that together with *abhyasa* (practice) you must keep on developing and increasing *vairagya* (dispassion). *Abhyasa* should get valiant, effective and powerful support from *vairagya*: “I will see to it that I am on guard, awake, alert, vigilant and dynamically engaged in seeing that the movement is ever in one direction only and not in a contrary direction.”

This is the fruit of effort. This is the fruit of ardent yearning, strong longing and a very great sustained enthusiasm and determination that thus my life shall be and not otherwise. It seems to be a great task. It is a great task, yet it is not a great task. You can reduce it to a simple, possible and not very difficult task. How ?

God in His great wisdom, love and compassion has so made it that your life, this long journey towards immortality and divine perfection, is rationed out to you only in tiny sections of little, individual days. Each section is a very limited time period relieved by periods of restfulness, recuperation and renewal. You are only required to attend to one section at a time, not all of life at once.

Therefore, you only contend with one day at a time.

You make up your mind: “Today is going to be a divine day. Today is going to be a God-oriented movement. Today is going to be a day in which I’m going to be a perfect replica of God who is my Father, in whose image I am made. He is divine, and so am I. Divinity will infill every moment of this day. This day—that is sufficient. I will attend to making this day a perfect day. I’ll attempt, by every means possible, to make this day a grand symphony.

“I will attempt this with all my sincerity, with all my honesty, with all my earnestness and with all the powers of my being. I will revel in it. I will rejoice in it, I will exult in trying to make this day a thing of beauty and joy for all—within a joy for me, without a joy for others—for it will bring out all that is auspicious, blessed, bright, beautiful, divine.” Thus bring to bear your entire powers, all your sincerity, all your earnestness and all your enthusiasm. That’s all you’re required to do.

It is not to think of spiritual life in terms of whole years or long periods, of a great struggle or a big journey. Nothing, nothing, nothing! You are only expected to attend to the day that has dawned and that is in your hands. Look to it, make it perfectly spiritual, sublime, noble! Then you have a golden key to success in a simple, easy, nevertheless, unfailing, effective way.

This is the secret. This is within the possibility of everyone. Strive with all your might just for this one day—the gift of God, today. God bless you in this effort!

DESIRE AND DESERVE

There is a significant saying: “One gets what one deserves.” This does not apply to the spiritual field only. If people complain about the government, government officials, administrative authorities—their injustice, their corruption, their nepotism—it is said: “In a country and in a nation, people get the government that they deserve, because it is they who are responsible for sending people to the top.”

In our own lives, if we deserve something better, then we obtain something better. If we deserve something still better, then things change and we get something still better. It is what we do to ourselves, how we work upon ourselves, that ultimately decides what will be obtained by us.

Remember that within the context of Hindu *dharma*, our spiritual culture and the direct experience of our ancients, it is always said that the almighty Universal Spirit, the Supreme Lord, God, is a *kalpataru* (wish-fulfilling tree), is *kamadhenu* (the divine cow who fulfils all wishes), is *chintamani* (the divine pearl which gives everything). Devotees also laud Him by addressing Him with heart-filled gratitude: “Thou art *vanchita-phala-pradayaka*—One who bestowest whatsoever is wished for.”

But then, there is something significant in this saying. They say *vanchita-phala-pradayaka*. *Phala* means fruit. A fruit is something that has been worked for diligently over months and years. A seed has been sown, it has been watered, carefully tended to and nurtured. It has been fenced in and protected, and when all that is necessary has been done, then it yields fruit. They did not say that He bestowest whatsoever *vastu* (object) is wished for, rather whatsoever *phala* (fruit) is wished for. Whatsoever fruit has been desired by an individual soul, immediately He gives it, whatsoever fruit. A fruit is something that has been worked for.

That means that He ever readily bestows that which one desires and then deserves, having worked for that which has been desired. You may have supreme, sublime desires, highest aspiration, the noblest of spiritual ambitions—all are very good—but you must back them up with patient, diligent *purushartha* (self-effort), *abhyasa* (practice). Through such earnest exertion you will deserve. And when thus you have desired, aspired nobly, and worked diligently, God then becomes to you *kamadhenu*, *kalpataru* and *chintamani*. Therefore, our aspirations, lofty desires, should be backed up by the patient, sincere and earnest living of a life conducive and favourable for the fulfilment of these desires. Gurudev was fond of saying: “Everything is possible! Nothing is impossible provided you deserve it, you work for it. Desire and then deserve.” Desire and then deserve—desire becomes fulfilled.

And the very fact that God or Providence or the Supreme Reality has put a spark of such desire in your heart, has put a spark of aspiration in your heart, is itself proof-positive that you are meant for great things. It is itself enough sign that God intends to shower upon you supreme blessedness. Otherwise, out of millions and billions of human beings wandering deluded upon the surface of this earth, why should He choose a few, call them and endow them with this aspiration? You can count these few on your fingertips, whereas millions grope in darkness and are quite satisfied wallowing in the mire of *samsara*, earthliness. They feel comfortable and rejoice, thinking that they are quite all right.

When such is the prevailing condition of humanity, how is it, why is it, that you have been called, pulled, made to go in a different direction, and been given ideas and aspirations, higher noble ambitions in this direction? Why? Because as the Bible says: “You are chosen.” God has some special intention. A few strive for perfection out of countless millions of people—*manushyanam sahasreshu kascid yatati sidhaye* (Among

thousands of men, one perchance strives for perfection). And do you not realise that you belong to that few? Do you not realise this? And, therefore, do you not feel that having been chosen, belonging to this elite few, this microscopic little group, that it is a great privilege and honour bestowed upon you by the Supreme, a great chance and opportunity? And, therefore, do you not feel that you must prove yourself worthy of this gift that has been offered?

Let us conclude by considering this home truth: namely, where there is a will, there is a way to obtain whatever is worthwhile obtaining, to reach whatever goal and supreme objective we have set for ourselves. All things yield and become favourable to a soul that has will, that has willed it, determined it, and with determination proceeds to work for his high ideals.

Obstacles may be many, difficulties may be many. That is the order of the day in this imperfect world of *maya* and the three *gunas*. It is not all *sattva*; it is *rajas* and *tamas* also. It is not that the scriptures have misled us or have kept hidden from us the facts of life, the truths about this *samsara*. No, they have been very, very honest, outspoken, frank, truthful and unambiguous with us. They have put before us all that is negative, all that is to be encountered. They have not deceived us. They have said: “No, no, it is not very easy.” But then, they have also said: “The most difficult can be rendered very easy if you have the wish and the will for it.” That is the thing desirable, the one thing desirable.

For if the Supreme Reality is *kamadhenu*, *kalpataru*, *chintamani*, *vanchita-phala-pradayaka*, if He is that, which He undoubtedly is, and more, then we have to be like a Nachiketas, a Savitri, a Prahallada, a Mira, a Bhagiratha. Because where there is a will, there is surely a way. This then is the truth upon which we should base our life, the living of our life, and the activities of our life. God bless you all!

BELIEF, FAITH, BEING AND DOING

When food is withdrawn from our physical bodies, strength decreases, one feels weak, one is unable to exert. If food is stopped beyond a certain limit of time, starvation ensues. And if food is further withheld, starvation leads to death. But then, a person can fall ill, lose weight and become weak even when he is provided with the most nourishing food if he cannot digest and assimilate it. Even if his stomach can digest the food, if due to a diseased condition his intestines cannot assimilate it or absorb it, he will slowly starve unless he is fed through the veins. So, the essence of sustaining yourself physically by physical food lies in your ability to assimilate, to absorb, to take in and utilise the food that is given.

Similarly, our life, our strength, our progress day by day, the enhanced conditions of our inner faculties of mind—memory, thought, intelligence, rationality, psychological development—through *vichara* and *viveka*, enquiry and discrimination etc., depend upon what we are actually able to absorb, what we actually assimilate into ourselves. And what we take in that makes for gradual growth in our personality, our wisdom, our deep understanding of life, our becoming sensitively aware of certain insights in life pertaining to ourselves and the world around us—the nature of things and people, of human relationships, of what should be and what should not be—all depends upon how much we are able to absorb and assimilate.

It is not without reason that our ancients reiterated again and again: “You must not only hear and read, but you must reflect. You must not only hear, read and reflect, but you should deeply meditate and understand. You must not only hear, read, reflect, meditate and understand, but it should

become your *svabhava*, your own. You must become that.”

In the Gita it says: “A person is what he believes in.” And the key to this process of successfully assimilating from whatever you learn and becoming what you assimilate is in believing in what you want to become. Have firm and deep belief: “I believe, and I know I will be what I believe. I will become what I believe because that is the truth. And, if I do believe, it will certainly transform me into what I wish to become and believe in.”

So, faith and belief are the twin wings, as it were, of the bird of your spirit. Faith and belief are the two legs that have to take you to your destination. Faith and belief are the left and right hands that can enable you to achieve anything, take up any task and do it. Faith and belief are like the two eyes that enable a person to see correctly, wholly, with the right perspective. Faith and belief are the indispensable twin factors that succeed in making you what you wish to become—deep faith, deep belief.

Again and again you should keep the company of those in whose company your faith increases, your beliefs become confirmed, unshaken, they become firmly established within you, and you become firmly established in what you believe. Then, with deep faith and belief and being what you believe in, striving your very best to actualise it in life so that it becomes your *svabhava*, it becomes your very nature. You become that.

Translate what you are into your daily activity. Never put much interval between what you have become due to your firm faith and belief and acting it out. What you are, that you must do. Otherwise, a condition will arise when faith, belief and what you have become due to faith and belief becomes a static condition, not a dynamic and progressive condition. There is stagnation, arrested movement, no action.

You get stuck. If you maintain the status quo having attained the highest and ultimate, it is all right, it is in the fitness of things. But, if you maintain the status quo in the middle of the way, you deprive yourself of the supreme, crowning glory of the highest attainment and achievement.

Therefore, examine yourself, and keep on examining yourself, ruthlessly: Are all these ingredients actively operating within you, namely, deep belief, firm faith, becoming what you believe in, and translating what you are into living, into doing, into a dynamic expression of what you are by constantly, actively manifesting it, expressing it in every detail of your day-to-day living?

Backed up by firm faith and a living belief, being and doing will take you to the Goal, to the supreme consummation of your life. It can make you one with the Cosmic Being. Therefore, the ingredients of sure, gradual success and attainment lie in these four: belief, faith, becoming what you believe and have faith in, and living and doing that which you are—*sraddha*, *visvasa*, *svabhava*, *abhyasa*, belief, faith, being and doing.

EFFORT LINKED WITH FAITH

Spiritual life, spiritual striving, spiritual practice, Yoga, Vedanta and *sadhana* all constitute a science, an exact science as much as any physical science upon the outer field of this material universe. Just as the outer field of the material universe follows certain precise patterns which invariably follow exact laws, so upon the inner field of the spiritual universe all things move in a predictable manner according to precise laws.

All attainment, all achievement is the result of effort put forth in a suitable manner in a direction where the object desired is attainable, not in any other direction. If a water diviner tells a farmer to dig for water in a certain spot, then the procedure is always to dig vertically, straight down. They do not dig in any other direction. It is done precisely, geometrically, correctly. And it is such digging that yields water. If, instead, one digs at an angle one may go down hundreds of feet but one will miss the water indicated by the water diviner.

This is the importance of direction. Misdirected energy, misdirected effort would achieve certain results, but not the desired result. It will not get you what you are looking for, what you want. You will get a lot of excavated earth and it will get you to some depth, but you will not gain the desired fruit. Something else might be had, but not what you are seeking for.

Even so, spiritual science is a precise science where effort has to be put forth in the right direction. It is an exact scientific process, but only it is a divine science. It is a science that transcends time, space, here, there, now, then, and name and form, because it is the quest after the timeless, the eternal. It is the quest after the spaceless, infinite, boundless, limitless, immeasurable; but, nevertheless, it is an exact science, a

transcendental science.

The Upanishads call it *para vidya*, a science of that which transcends all the known norms, all relativity. Nevertheless, it is a science where when certain conditions are fulfilled, where effort is in the right direction and where one never loses sight of what one wants, the results are as precise and predictable as in any field of the outer, material universe.

And, one should also recognise well that one must persevere. No scientific discovery was made with a single attempt. A harvest of grain is not produced in a single day. No fruit appears on a tree before its time. So, with patience one has to persevere in putting forth the needed effort. This is wisdom. Impatience is a lack of understanding that in a science things work in a precise manner. Therefore, in this science no effort is ever wasted, no effort is in vain, no effort is futile. Every bit of effort put forth adds on to all the effort that has gone before.

Therefore the saying: "Pray and also work." Go on working, go on praying patiently. Your work will guarantee and ensure that your prayer comes true. And your prayer assures and guarantees that you will not stop midway in your work. It infills you with a force, a feeling, an urge, a drive. Because prayer believes and work achieves.

It is the force of this faith, this belief, that makes the work authentic, genuine, effective and fruitful. They cannot be divorced. They mutually supplement and support each other. It is an art and a science.

Faith, trust and devotion are an art, an inner state, a state that is a manifestation of that within you which is already divine. And effort, *sadhana*, is a science that may seemingly be undivine. It is through the body, the mind, the intellect, the emotions, through certain techniques and processes. It seems

to be very much on this relative plane. But when linked together with this inner divine force, the principle of faith, *sraddha*, knowledge is obtained. *Sraddhavan labhate jnanam* (The man who is full of faith obtains knowledge).

What a person believes in, that verily that person is, that verily constitutes the personality of the person. This is a declaration in the Gita regarding this faith, the inner state of calmly and firmly believing in the objective of your life. Thus linked together—prayer with faith, and effort with resolution and calm, patient perseverance—they bring about seeming miracles. Perseverance and patience are required because as in any other science, things take their own time.

Thus, the wise *sadhaka*, the earnest seeker, understanding that the divine science is also a science governed by precise laws and conditions which if fulfilled yield results, is never perturbed and never gives up. Calmly, patiently, perseveringly and continuously one keeps up the effort that leads to realisation. Thus, one should relate oneself to this divine science as a person of faith and a person who is a *yogi*. Because, the hallmark of *yoga* is *abhyasa*; repeated, continuous effort is the inner *svarupa* of *yoga*.

Let us reflect well upon these facts and truths about our spiritual life and become the fortunate few who reach the Goal. It is those that keep on struggling upwards that reach the peak of the mountain, not those who keep on looking back at the distance already climbed. That is irrelevant. Those who keep looking ahead at the ever-shortening distance between themselves and the peak climb and attain the Goal. They say: "I am drawing nearer. The peak is closer to me now." This is the vision that grants fulfillment.

A POSITIVE MIND — YOUR GREATEST ASSET

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved *sadhaks* and seekers! We have been discussing the wisdom of positivism in our mental state as opposed to the folly of negativism. Because, the mental state is the ultimate deciding factor and the *antahkarana* of the mind and intellect the ultimate deciding ground where your life and the ultimate outcome of your life—its fruition or its frustration—has to be worked out. Outward things are nothing, outward things are a creation of your inward state, and all outward things become nullified or overcome if your inward state is of that nature where it gathers within itself and activates its potentials and begins to become a conquering instrument.

If your interior state assumes “*nashto mohah smritirlabdha tvatprasadat mayachyuta; sthito'smi gatasandehah karishye vachanam tava* (Destroyed is my delusion as I have gained my memory (knowledge) through Thy grace O Krishna; I am firm, my doubts are gone; I will act according to Thy word),” if this type of robust dynamism comes to prevail in your mind, then there is no power on earth that can stand in the way of you taking your life to its ultimate pinnacle point of perfection and total fruition. This is the simple truth. And if Napoleon declared that there was no word “impossible” in his type of dictionary, he declared a fact, he declared the simple truth.

We are constantly being faced with new situations, new circumstances. If such a situation is seen, to draw attention to that situation is necessary; otherwise, it cannot be corrected. And to focus our mind on that situation is also perhaps necessary because it sets us thinking. But to lament that situation is incorrect. I would disagree with the wisdom of it, the logic of it, the rationality of it. It is irrational, it is non-

productive, it is negative, for it affects all hearers. Not only that, the very purpose of drawing attention to a specific situation is nullified, because to lament that situation demonstrates a basic and essential lack of faith in one's self, which is not Vedanta, which is totally contradictory to true and classical Vedanta.

Vedanta does not accept even a vestige of hesitation in having this faith: “I am indeed Brahman, I am indeed the Absolute, no other than the Absolute—*aham brahmasmi; ahameva'vyayo'nantah suddhavijnanavigraha, sukham duhkham na janami katham kasyapi vartate* (I alone am imperishable, infinite, the form of pure Consciousness, I do not know pleasure or pain or how they can affect anybody); *janma mrityurna te chittam bandhamokshau subha'subham, katham rodishi re vatsa. namarupau na te na me* (You have no birth, no death, no mind; you have no bondage, no liberation, nothing good, nothing bad; why do you weep, O child. You have no name or form, nor have I any); *vedanta sarasvasvam jnanam vijnanam eva cha, ahamatma nirakarah sarvavyapi svabhavatah* (This is the sum and essence of all Vedanta, this is wisdom and knowledge: I am the Atma that is formless, all-pervading by nature).” This is Vedanta.

Vedanta is a clarion call; it is a bold declaration. It is the assertion, the affirmation of a firm conviction, because it is truth. Truth is stronger than anything else, *satyameva jayate* (truth alone triumphs), and therefore any lamenting of a fact is contrary to the very spirit of Vedanta. Because when a situation is posited and one draws attention to the situation, the motivation should be to offer it as a challenge. Here is the situation, now what are we going to do about it?

“*Kshudram hridayadaurbalyam tyaktvottishtha parantapa* (Cast off this mean weakness of the heart. Stand up, O scorcher of the foes.)”—that is the call of the Gita.

“*Nayamatma balahinena labhyah*”—that is the declaration of the Upanishads—“This Atman, O seeker, cannot be achieved or attained by the weak, by the negative, by the diffident, by those lacking in self confidence.” That means those who are negative in mentality. A situation is brought to one’s attention and notice so that the person may call forth all the reserves that are within, and there is an infinite power within each one. Immediately call forth these reserves and do the needful in the situation—that is the attitude!

The stuff of each individual is measured by one’s response to the challenge. The attitude which ultimately made Arjuna say: “I am standing up, I have got my bow in my hand, I am ready to fight,” is inherent in all healthy individuals. If you put a riddle before a group of children, they become excited and eager to solve it. They will not leave it until they get an answer. You drag the bleating lamb to the water and ask it to look at its reflection, not for it to continue to bleat like a lamb, but rather for it to roar like the lion it really is. That is the thing needful. There is no other way for a real human being who is made in the image of God, who is Divinity awaiting to be liberated, awaiting to break forth from the shackles that bind one’s infinity and eternity.

That is real Vedanta, and anything other than that is to be rejected as not being part of classical Vedanta. It is to be summarily rejected; it should not be given a place for even one second. Because we are talking about the need, the importance, the wisdom, the indispensable necessity of having a positive, creative, constructive attitude and approach of the mind. That is the key, that is the only thing needful. Everything will be overcome by it, everything will be provided by it whether you are a *bhakta* or a Vedantin.

This indeed should be our state of mind. For that only has mind been given. Mind has been given to us in order to

conquer everything, conquer *maya*. And therefore the Upanishads leave no doubt about it. What was the strength of mind of Nachiketas? What was the strength of mind of Markendeya, of Savitri, of Bhagirata, of Mira? What was the strength of mind of all those great ones who achieved anything whatsoever? What was the strength of mind of Prince Siddhartha (Buddha)? He proved to us that such a state of mind is the one thing desirable, the one thing necessary, the one thing that shows the wisdom within you to overcome everything. Each one has this potential.

Mind, therefore, is your greatest asset, your greatest wealth. By some aberration, by some mistake, it has been rather regarded as a problem. It has not been properly understood. You may even consider it to be your greatest problem. If so you have to convert it into an asset, because it is an asset. It has not been given to you to be a problem, but, on the contrary, it has been given to you to be utilised as the greatest thing that has ever been given to a being, for it throws wide open the portals to liberation and perfection. Mind is the one great endowment of the Universal Soul to the individual being. Mind is the endowment that makes man God. May you use it in a wise and positive way and become blessed!

ALWAYS BE POSITIVE !

One of the favourite sayings of Gurudev, which he both wrote in his writings as well as quoted in his divine talks was, "Never despair. Never despair. *Nil desperandum*." And a poet once said, "Hope springs eternal in the human breast." Another poet said, "Tell me not in mournful numbers life is but an empty dream." You have come here to strive and attain. Strive on. Do *purushartha*. "Heart within, God overhead." Be strong. Be determined and plod on. If thus you do, you will get help from God. That is the meaning of "Heart within and God overhead." In your heart have the right attitude and plod on. Do exertion and then from God help will come.

There are two ways of approaching life. One is diffidence, lack of confidence, negativity: "I don't think I can. It's too difficult. I can't." Another way is: "I can. Whether I can or can't, how can I say unless I first of all try? Then only I can know whether I can or can't. So to come to a foregone conclusion that I can't is not rational. It is irrational. Let me give it a fair trial. I will try my best." And if after trying your very best, you do not succeed in attaining the objective, I can assure you, you have not failed. Success may not be yours, but you have succeeded. You have fulfilled a human being's duty. Because you are made in the image of God, you are not a bundle of negativity. God is all that is positive, all that is auspicious, good and beautiful. There is no negativity in God, and you are made in His image. You have potential for all that is positive and positive only. You should not belie your divine nature. At every step, in all things, your life should prove your divine nature.

Therefore it behooves you to always take a positive attitude towards life. Always have a positive view of things, not a negative one. Have a positive attitude towards life, and

in your daily life always move forward by taking a positive approach to life, never a negative approach. Then your heart is in the state that the poet implied when he said, "Heart within and God overhead."

And it is for such a heart that we should pray to the Lord: "I have full trust that You will be my leader, that Your grace will be my guiding force and a leading light in my life day by day. So, with Your help there is nothing that I cannot do. With Your help, O Lord, all things are possible for me. And I will take Your help for granted because You are grace. You are love and compassion. You are ever ready to bestow Your grace upon all sincere seeking sadhakas. Being certain of this, I shall strive, having full trust that You will help where help is needed."

Therefore, of the two attitudes, a positive and negative attitude towards life, of the two approaches, a positive and negative approach to life, and of the two ways of viewing things, a positive and negative view towards all things, the wise *sadhaka* always takes the positive approach—which is the right approach—and never takes the negative approach which is the wrong approach.

Hope is a divine quality. Determination is a divine quality. It is a manifestation of *sakti*. Therefore, it is our duty to ourselves and to God to always keep our interior in a positive state. It is our duty to always take a positive view of things. It is our duty to always take a positive approach towards life, and it is our duty to always move forward keeping in our heart a positive attitude towards life and actions. This is the right attitude, and this you must adopt. And this will help you to succeed in your life!

NOTHING SUCCEEDS LIKE SUCCESS

Beloved Immortal Atman! Blessed children of the Divine! Sometimes very common sayings which are current in normal society, passing off as ordinary clichés or oft-quoted sayings, will be found to have originated either from shrewd psychological observations and truths about human behaviour, or to have originated from deep philosophical truth.

One such saying may be of interest to all who wish to succeed. Succeed in what? Succeed in any endeavour. We all want to succeed in our spiritual quest, in our spiritual *sadhana*. We want to succeed in the efforts we are putting forth to attain a certain goal which we know is really worth attaining. Who does not wish to succeed? Everyone aims to succeed. There are any number of books written on success, and those who write them usually succeed in becoming both rich and famous. The word success itself has an attraction, and the saying I mentioned is popular in Western society among ordinary people: "Nothing succeeds like success."

What is the speciality about this saying? The speciality is that it tells us something about the mind and how events influence the mind. You all know that the sure way of failing is to have a negative state of mind: lack of self-confidence, diffidence, hesitation, nervousness. "I may not succeed"—if this idea is already implanted into the brain, you work for failure only. You do not expect or hope to succeed, and therefore naturally you create conditions whereby this inner mental condition manifests itself in your outer circumstances. Even if you were capable of success, yet by the mentality of your mind you lose that opportunity, deprive yourself of success. The reason is because you already have an "I cannot succeed" idea, and once you have this idea, there is not much that other people or forces can do for you.

This defeatist mentality is sometimes ingrained due to our wrong way of thinking, and Patanjali Maharshi seems to have known it. He said: "Keep the inner mechanism in a positive state always; never be depressed or dejected, never be in a state of negativity; be always cheerful, contented, keep the mind always positive." It is only a positive mentality that can ultimately bring you success. So in his Yoga Sutras, Patanjali insisted that when you determine to become a Yogi, to enter into the field of *yoga sadhana*, that you first correct yourself by correcting your outer actions through taking a vow of firm adherence to certain virtues, so that you will never swerve from those virtues, so that your actions will always be good, virtuous, godly, holy, always *daivi* (divine). Thus you correct your outer condition first—all your actions in *vyavahara* (society).

The next step is to correct your inner condition by keeping the interior clean, keeping both the body and mind clean, always pure. Keep your interior in a state of cheerfulness, contentment, positivity, never negativity, never having diffidence, never having a mentality of defeatism. Always say, "Yes, there is nothing I cannot do; I will succeed."

And thus your interior becomes well geared, an instrument fit for Yoga and meditation, because Yoga and meditation, Yoga and spiritual life, *sadhana*, is a process of constantly facing defeat and yet constantly being determined: "This next time I shall succeed, I have to overcome, I shall overcome; this defeat is only a passing phenomenon, but success is the final outcome, I know it. Therefore, until I get that final outcome, I am going to persist and carry on this effort." So without at all caring for even ten defeats, a hundred defeats, a thousand defeats, you carry on and succeed.

Because this controlling of the mind and the senses and trying to make the mind go inward through *pratyahara* is

not an easy joke; it is a stupendous task. How difficult it is, how much effort is necessary, has been compared to reversing the Ganga and making it flow towards its source, Gangotri. So *pratyahara*, making the outgoing mind inward, is a real task, but the Yogi is not perturbed because he says: "I can do it. I know I have to succeed in doing it, I shall succeed in doing it, and one day everything will be under my control." This is *tapasya*, a constant state of determination inside.

Tapasya is constant determination when being confronted with the opposite, negative side, *asuric* side: "I will never give up, I will never accept defeat, I will never allow the negative to overcome me." That determination is the essence of successful *tapasya*. This is present in a Yogi. The Yogi is a *tapasvi*, a *samyami*. And the Yogi is a person of great inner and outer cleanliness and purity. He is a person of absolute cheerfulness, absolute contentment, *santosha*. There is no defeatist mentality; he is all positive, all determination and all dogged perseverance. He says, "Never give up." Why? Because his strength comes from two sources.

He daily draws inspiration, courage and fresh energy from *svadhyaya*—thrilling inspirations, inspiring ideas. They are positive ideas, full of spiritual force. He drinks of these living waters of spiritual inspiration, spiritual instructions and spiritual strength and force from *svadhyaya*. Every day he is freshened, he is invigorated.

The second source is *isvarapranidhana*: "I am always abiding in God, so I lack nothing. I have the infinite resources, the inexhaustible strength of God at my back. So how can I ever fail, how can I ever be incapable of doing anything? How can I ever lack energy or force to succeed in my quest? Never! I have the infinite resources of God always with me, always at my back, because I always live with Him, I abide in Him. He is my support, my strength." And thus *isvarapranidhana* is placing yourself in the

Divine always, living in the Divine, being aware that the Divine is within you and you are in the Divine. These are all transformers of the interior of the Yogi even at the very beginning of the great Yoga pilgrimage, Yoga quest.

Therefore, the mind-state should be always success oriented, and once it succeeds then that success itself gives it a new urge and puts it into a positive state. Therefore, they say never discourage little children, even if they have not performed well. Say, "Well done, wonderful!" That was Gurudev's mentality. Little children's mind-natures are in a state of developing, and so if at that time you go on giving them positive suggestions, always encouraging, always praising, always admiring, then they soon develop a very positive mentality, ever able to succeed.

Thus I place before you for your consideration the inner significance and import of this apparently common but very shrewd and correct saying: "Nothing succeeds like success." It is true, success puts you into a positive state, makes you self-confident. Then the door to success is thrown wide open for you. Therefore, always have this state of positive self-confidence, a robust, determined state of mind, and attain the Goal, not in the distant future, not in another birth, but in this very life, and become supremely blessed!

God bless you! Gurudev's teachings grant you this positive state of confidence—*atmavisvas*, and may you constantly, with diligence, cultivate this success mentality. *Uddharet atmanatmanam* (Let a man raise himself by his own self). It will pay you infinite dividends. May God's grace and Gurudev's *guru kripa* and your own *atmavisvas*—right state of mind, grant you the supreme goal of liberation and divine perfection in this very birth!

ENTHUSIASM — GOD IN YOU

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of Light! Do not lose opportunities. Each day is a opportunity. Each moment of each day is an opportunity. Never stop moving towards the Goal. Ever keep on.

The river keeps flowing and reaches the ocean. Stone upon stone great forts are built. Stroke by stroke the sculptor keeps on hammering away. It is not in a single day he creates a masterpiece that people gaze at in admiration and wonderment; no, not in a single day. Rain falls only in drops, drop by drop, and soon the drains are filled to overflowing, streams become swollen and rush towards the river which is soon in flood. But rain has fallen only drop by drop. It is only stroke by stroke that the master painter brings about a miracle of art such as *The Last Supper*.

The rogue Ratnakar did not complete his *purashcharana* in one day. He repeated Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram. He repeated each Name one by one, one by one, one by one. He kept on repeating and shone as the great sage Valmiki. He became a *trikala jnani*, a knower of the past, present and future, and even before the birth of Lord Rama, he wrote the entire story of His advent, from His birth to the completion of His divine mission.

What anyone else has done, you too can do, for nothing is impossible. And those great ones have done what they did in order to show the potential of man, the possibility of man. That is their great value to us. And therefore we are only to keep on sustained effort. That is life, ever in the right direction.

But there is one thing: we have to get along with the mind. We have to reckon with the mind. And if there is one quality which can help you, if there is one quality which can

ensure and guarantee to you what is due to you by sustained effort, it is enthusiasm, the enthusiasm that brings about all achievement, all attainments. Enthusiasm, *utsaha*, is Lakshmi, it is all auspiciousness, all blessedness. It is a manifestation of Goddess Bhagavati's *vidya maya*, the auspicious aspect of *maya*, the helpful aspect of *maya*—enthusiasm, *utsaha*, as well as *viveka* and *vichara* (discrimination and right enquiry).

Through *viveka* and *vichara* ever try to understand this world outside you, its hollowness, its transitory nature, its true essential emptiness. You cannot find anything that is worthwhile, precious, substantial here; everything is unsubstantial. Try to understand. And try to understand yourself; namely, that you have come here born to achieve, born to attain, born to regain the lost awareness of your divinity. And seek to understand God, your ever-ready helper, your never-failing support and guide, ever at hand, ever ready to help and ever helping in spite of yourself, never failing in spite of your occasional loss of faith, never, never failing. When He has taken you in hand, He will see to it that you attain the Supreme. He will not let go. Anything and everything may fail us, we may even fail ourselves, but God will not fail us. Believe me, *God will not fail you*. This is the truth and it is ever true; it is an eternal truth.

Therefore, with enthusiasm, keep on your effort day by day, with each breath, with each step, with each moment. Do not enter into forgetfulness, do not enter into heedlessness. That is something which you must always guard yourself against every moment. Again and again I say—heedlessness and forgetfulness—you must always be on the alert that these two do not assail you. Otherwise all effort will come to a stop.

There was a time many years ago when these motor-boats did not ply Mother Ganga. Boatmen had to row, and as

we watched them, one thing we noticed: that if they stopped rowing, the current started taking them down the river. It was only the continuity of their rowing that took them in any direction they desired, to any point on the other bank that they wanted to reach.

A great truth is revealed here. Through sustained effort everything is achieved, but heedlessness and forgetfulness brings effort to a close, and if a moment passes, it goes into eternity, it is no longer yours. Therefore understand—through *viveka* and *vichara*—understand. Understand your inner content, how the mind can lapse into forgetfulness, lapse into indifference and lapse into a state of absence of enthusiasm. If the fire is not continuously fanned, it dies down. Enthusiasm is the great source of all strength and power, it is the great source of all activity, dynamism. It is your greatest friend.

Therefore remember, it is not without reason, it is not for nothing that God has drawn you to this great centre of spirituality, India and Rishikesh. It is because you deserved it that He has sought to bestow it upon you. Therefore, if you have deserved this, deserve something higher also, and that too will be given. Ask, and it will not be withheld.

You have been called because you have been found worthy and deserving. Therefore, realise your worth and keep on deserving more and more, not *desiring* more and more but *deserving* more and more. That is the key. Keep on sustained effort and back it up with a cheerful robust enthusiasm. God speed you. May you attain to the other shore of immortality and shine as a liberated sage, saint and Yogi! God bless you!

EVER KEEP THE SUBLIME IDEAL BEFORE YOU

Blessed Immortal Atman! Beloved children of the Divine! Amongst the innumerable human beings on the surface of the earth, those few individuals who have before them an ideal and a goal, who live in order to strive, to fulfil an ideal and to attain a goal, they alone can truly be said to live their life in a very, very special way. For those who have no particular ideal before them to fulfil, who do not have as yet a clear-cut goal to attain, life is not being lived by them, but rather they are helplessly carried down this onward rushing stream called life. It is not they who are in charge, who are in control, who are engaged in a purposeful pursuit, but rather it is life in all its various implications that is in control. They are creatures of circumstance. They are caught in the midst of situations and are dragged along the currents of certain appetites and urges. They are caught in the net of desires and cravings and are pushed and propelled by inner compulsive cravings and desires.

In the eleventh chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna, with his *divyachakshu* (divine eye), beheld both the benign and the not so benign aspects of the great cosmic Power in all its dynamic manifestation. In one direction he beheld a glorious Being, wonderfully adorned, shining, radiant, awe-inspiring. Yet, simultaneously in another direction, he saw another aspect, a terrifying aspect of It: something terrible, all-consuming, all-destroying, with a stream of living beings falling into Its jaws to be crushed, consumed and to disappear. As constantly as life was emerging, death was also consuming.

In this same way, life can be a creative process where every moment adds something to you, heightens you, enriches you and takes you further up; and it becomes to you a steady, continuous progress towards the Goal Supreme and for the

fulfilment of a grand ideal. For, already within you, within your vision and understanding, your range of aspiration, has come a clear-cut goal and an ideal, something noble, something more than the common. Therefore, to you, in total, life means a creative process, a progression, an attainment, a fulfilment.

When this is absent, life consumes the individual. The individual is not living life. He is hurried away, as it were, down the stream, helpless, impelled, propelled, pushed hither, pulled thither and lamenting, but sometimes, very strangely, thinking himself to be fully in charge, imagining himself to be very, very purposeful. That is the mystery of *maya*. That is what is known as *kartritva abhimana*, the ego of doership. One is not really doing anything; one is made to do, and yet one thinks, “No, no, I am doing, I am doing it very cleverly, I am doing it in a wonderful way.”

And this is what is known as *moha* (delusion) and *bhramanti* (erroneous thinking). It is a mysterious working of an illusory power about which we know nothing. We only posit its presence because of its effects. We know that millions and billions of human beings are totally deluded, totally in a state of intoxication, totally in a state of enslavement. They are not able to control their anger and their passion, but they think they are manifesting great power. Anger, a weakness, is taken to be a strength. Passion, a terrible overcoming process, is taken to be something to be proud of. Even so, various other enslaving forces, that propel one hither and thither, are mistaken for embellishments.

Thus, not aware of what one is doing, one is constantly allowing oneself to be made to dance by this mysterious power called mind, which is another name for *maya*. And so totally identified is the *jiva*-consciousness with the mind that the individual never knows that he is enslaved, never knows his exact situation. Rather, he rejoices in it, thinking “this is it,

this is life.” As such, even while being made to dance like a puppet, one imagines oneself as being master of the stage and putting on a great performance. This is total delusion. And this is the position of ninety-nine percent of humanity, ninety-nine percent of the world’s population.

In this state of total identification with the mind, one does not know of one’s reality apart from the mind, different from the mind, distinct from the mind, something far above. And not knowing one’s real identity, one lives one’s entire life and passes away without ever affirming and asserting the Self. The Self is never manifested, is never given active expression to. Rather, in a state of total delusion, caught and enslaved in delusion, one thinks oneself as the master of the situation and as expressing one’s Self, whereas one is in a state of stupor.

A sage says that this is the condition of the vast, vast majority of human beings — *pitva mohamayim pramadamadiram unmatta bhutam jagat* — they are in a state of intoxicated spiritual stupor, of slumber, of total forgetfulness of the real Self, of total delusion about their true identity. Days, weeks, months, years fly by and life rushes towards its conclusion, yet they are not aware of the passage of time. They are so totally in the grip of the ego, so constantly occupied by worldly affairs, that they have no time or inclination to try to pierce the gloom, rise above delusion and know themselves.

And the greatest concern is that in this condition the intellect further aids and abets *maya* by making the individual think how wise he is, how clearly he perceives. So there is intellectual delusion also. The intellect functions, but only to conform to this pattern of delusion and to further confirm one’s mistaken identity, even while imagining that by its exercise it has managed to go beyond deluded identity and be established in truth.

This is the very peculiar part played by the intellect. Seemingly it exercises knowledge, but it exercises its knowledge within the state of delusion, augmenting the delusion instead of destroying it. Whereas the intellect was meant to be the sharp, pointed spear to rend this dark curtain of delusion and go beyond it under the leadership of God-consciousness, it too succumbs to *maya* and further confirms the delusion by imagining that its knowledge is wisdom, imagining that *apara vidya* (lower knowledge) is *para vidya* (higher knowledge). This is part of the great delusion.

But those few fortunate beings into whom God has given this great grace of an awakening, and a continued active exercise of this awakened awareness as the basic part of their consciousness, having this inner state of light, they clearly perceive the Goal and are always aware that life is meant to be a fulfilment of a great, important, spiritual, philosophical, moral ideal. They indeed really live. They indeed make use of life, using it for the fulfilment of this ideal and for purposeful propulsion towards the great Goal. They are blessed.

Their purposefulness is because of their wakefulness, their awareness. And this active, inner wakefulness is progressive because a goal has already been set, and that goal is powerfully pulling it up every moment. This progressive awareness makes life meaningful for them as a constant movement to fulfil a great ideal, to attain a sublime goal. Ideals and goals are seemingly also present in the lives of others, but not in their true implication, in their true sense. For, there is but one ideal: movement towards Divinity, towards perfection, and there is but one goal: eternal awareness of one's essential nature. These two make life real life. Otherwise, we imagine we are living, but actually we are in the darkness of stagnation.

Thus should the awareness be awakened and kept constantly awake through constant pondering, *manana*, of the great truths presented to us by the scriptures like Vivekachudamani, Atmabodha, Bhagavatam and the Upanishads. That is our only guarantee of making life a purposeful process. That is the only guarantee. That is the only possibility of keeping away from the inner consciousness all delusion, all *moha*, all intoxication—a constant living in the light of these great truths and our own constantly exercised *vichara* (enquiry) and *viveka* (discrimination). Without actively and constantly exercising *vichara* and *viveka*, there is no *sadhana*, there is no spiritual life, there is no Yoga. One cannot be a *jijnasu* or *mumukshu*, and there is no true life. Life is not being lived; it is making use of you as a pawn, as a puppet.

Therefore, let ever within you ring that Upanishadic call: *uttisthata jagrata, prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise, be enlightened), and let every moment of your being be a response and an answer to this call—“Yes, I am awake, I stand up and move towards the Goal, I move towards wisdom supreme, I move towards the ultimate state of illumination and enlightenment.” Then every moment and every movement of your life and being will be a response to that Upanishadic call. It should ring with every beat of your heart. It *will* ring with every throb of your pulse. That is life. That is *sadhana*. That is *jijnasa*. That is true *mumukshutva*.

May God endow you with this inner awareness and purposefulness, dynamism and wakefulness! May you be like Nachiketas. May you be like one of those great immortal personalities of the Upanishads. That *kshamata* (capacity) is within each one of you. Therefore God has brought you to a place, a set-up and a life where all these are possible—if only you wish it, if only you will it. God bless you all!

WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF YOUR THOUGHT ?

Each morning we are drawn together here in a spirit of devotion and reverence, with a common intention of enriching our lives through a morning hour of prayer, reciting the Divine Name, and silent meditation—by which we add to our spiritual wealth, by which we move forward on the spiritual path, by which we elevate ourselves into higher and higher levels of spiritual consciousness, by which we seek to crown our lives with the ultimate blessedness of God-experience, vision of the Divine.

Every such gathering, all attempts to move in the direction of Truth, to lift up our hearts and minds into an awareness of that Reality, every such moment is our real life. It is when we thus spend our time in the company of fellow seekers, when we spend our time in united prayerfulness and attempt to move our hearts and minds in the direction of God, then alone we live. Otherwise, life is not worth living.

And today of all days is a great moment, a right moment, a supremely auspicious point in time in your life where you can make up your mind to achieve anything that you aspire after by making a decision that from this point in time, from today, from this moment, that thus shall be my life—this shall be my direction, this shall be my ideal and goal, and with every breath of my body, with my entire being, I shall strive to attain that great ideal, I shall concentrate and focus all my time, my attention, my energies, my activities towards that great attainment.

Once this resolution is taken and we give a definite direction to our life, and purposefully move in that direction, then all is well. All the gods, all the powers that be, come to your aid. They will support your onward and Godward

movement. That is called sadhana. That is called yoga abhyasa. That is called practical spiritual life. And today is the auspicious day of arambha (mental initiation of an action), of making a new beginning, of starting afresh.

Among other things that you determine to do about yourself, ponder for awhile, think, consider: What is the habitual content of your mind? When you are not engaged in doing something specific, what are you doing inwardly? What are your thoughts? In which direction does your mind move? What is its background when it is not outside, when it is not engaged and occupied? What is its background?

Have you diligently cultivated a permanent background of thought, so that when your mind is not obliged to think of anything else, it is always abiding in that thought, abiding in that state? Have you created such a state, such a thought, such a centre, a focus? For this is the real essence of steady, unhampered spiritual progress. As you think, so you become. Whatever you hold continuously and constantly in your mind, whatever you make your constant awareness, that is what is going to be your destiny.

Sit, introspect—try to find out. Be watchful. Observe yourself in the coming days and weeks and see what the inner state is, what the inner content of your mind is when it is not occupied by other things. A sublime, serene, sacred background of thought is your asset—so that you may always be centred in that, you may abide in that.

The background of thought of an advocate is always courts and documents and arguments. The background of thought of a doctor is always disease and diagnosis and medicines. The background of thought of an engineer is blueprints and building materials and construction.

What is your background of thought? Is it newspaper news or what you have seen on TV or what you have heard in gossip

with others? Or is it the purusha? Or is it the *paramatma*? Or is it the Great Reality? Or is it the one, all-pervading, ever-present, cosmic Spirit Divine? Or is it the shining ideal of supreme liberation? God- experience? a state of illumination and enlightenment? a state of being what you are?

What is your background of thought? Have you taken the trouble to diligently cultivate it so that it is your permanent state? That it is only occasionally you move away from that state outwards, to unavoidable, indispensable necessities—you think of other things only as an unavoidable duty, *kartavya karma*. You suffer to be made to think of other things; otherwise, you are ever centred in your own background. It is the constant, unwavering note in the midst of ever-changing other factors that come and go-but it never goes. It is there constantly, permanently, unchangingly, the centre of your being, the ultimate, permanent background of your thought.

All svadhyaya, all satsanga, all sravana, all prayer and sankirtan is to bring about an interior, an inner state, which is God, which is filled with Divinity, brahma-chintana, atma-chintana. This indeed is the great transforming power that can make the human being into a divinity, a man into God, a sadhaka into a siddha—a liberated being.

From the top of your head to the tip of your toenails, there should be but one vibration-the vibration of the Divine Name, the vibration of divine thought, the vibration of God, the vibration of the great Goal, satchidananda, of being established in the Reality. Our entire human potential—all our energies, all our strength, all our will-power should be channelised in that one direction, towards this one end—that I may live, move and have my being in God, that my inner consciousness may constantly abide in the great, glorious Divine Reality that shines within the core of my heart with the effulgence of a million suns.

To abide in God is the ultimate highest objective of all spiritual life, all *sadhana*, all striving—when a state is reached where your inner content is nothing but God, nothing but *satchidananda*, nothing but *paramatma*. To that end strive! Towards this inner state of God- consciousness may all your energies and activities be directed!

May you, upon this day of Vijaya Dasami, commence upon this Godward journey of going deeper and deeper into your own interior. Because this is an inner journey, not an outer journey. It is not in space, it is in consciousness. It is not in the world, it is in God. May God grant you success in this inner journey towards the centre of your being, which is God!

Ahamatma gudakesa sarvabhutasayasthitah (I am the Self, Arjuna, seated in the hearts of all beings). *Isvarah sarvabhutanam hriddese' rjuna tishthati* (God dwells in the hearts of all beings, O Arjuna). *Eko devah savrabhuteshu gudhah* (God who is one only is hidden in all beings). That and that alone should be the ultimate destination of this inner journey into the very depths of your being, into the very centre of your being. May this journey never cease. May this destiny always be reached. May this be your wealth, your supreme wealth. May this inner abidance in divine awareness, awareness of Divinity, be your constant state.

May God and Gurudev grace and bless you with this inner state of Divinity. May your whole life—your thoughts, words and actions-become a manifestation that reflects your inner state of Divinity. May the light that you have aroused within stream forth and radiate from you, illuminating your environment, so that wherever you go you move as a light.

May you commence upon this inner journey with determination and purposefulness upon this great day of a new beginning—the beginning of knowledge and wisdom, the beginning of a knowledge- filled and wisdom-directed life!"

DO YOU HAVE A SENSE OF URGENCY ?

The life of the Spirit, the life of *sadhana*, the life of laying by eternal treasures as distinct from perishable trifles, was brought home with full force and significance by the admonition of Jesus, the divine teacher of the Middle East, in the form of a query: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his spiritual life?" This was one of the great questions put before global mankind for all times. It places before each human individual a criterion to measure things, a measuring rod.

Similarly, Adi Sankaracharya in a very descriptive manner brings out more or less the same truth in the last line of each verse of his Guru Paduka Stotra: "You may have the wealth of the whole world, everything that can ever be desired, but of what use is it if your entire mind and heart is not totally absorbed in God and in following your spiritual teacher?"

This, indeed, is something that one should seriously consider. What are we engaged in? Are we engaged in laying by eternal treasures, or are we engaged in gathering trifles as life hurries past like a fast flowing river? Gurudev put it in his way: "Life is short, time is fleeting." With each incoming and outgoing breath, the allotted life span of each *jivatman's* residence in this earthly body is fast being depleted.

Therefore, the Upanishadic call: *uttishthata jagrata prapya varan nibodhata* (Arise, awake, having reached the wise become enlightened). This call should be ringing in the ear of every true aspiring soul, every real seeker, every *sadhaka* worth the name of *sadhaka*. Then alone some achievement is possible—not in indifference, not in *pramada* (heedlessness).

Admonitions are not lacking. Saints, sages, *siddhas*, *mahapurushas*, scriptures, *srutis*, *smritis*, *puranas* all sound

this call. They all give this caution; they all warn us: Before you know it, time will fly away. "*Dinamapi rajani sayam pratah sisiravasantau punarayatah; kalah kridati gacchatyayus tadapi na munchatyasavayuh* (Day and night, morning and evening, autumn and spring, come and go again and again. While time plays, our life ebbs away. Yet, alas, the wind of man's vain desires does not cease but continues to blow unsatiated)." Every day this *sloka* must be sounding again and again in your heart.

Many years ago, to make us understand with what keenness, with what great sense of urgency one should engage in practical spiritual life, Gurudev wrote: "When your house is on fire, how courageously, how daringly, without caring for anything, you will plunge into the house and rescue that which is precious." And here what you have to rescue is your own *nija svarupa* (true nature) from the clutches of desire and *maya*.

These great teachings should not go to waste. Are they all to be cries in the wilderness? Are they to be in vain? They will all be in vain if our mind is only intent upon petty sense pleasures. In his *Gitanjali*, Rabindranath Tagore compares this to children playing upon the shores of the sea of life, gathering shells, building sandcastles, and never thinking of the invaluable pearls that lie in the depth. And what will happen at the end of the day? The shells will be left and the sandcastles swept away by the tide.

Will your life be like that? Will you spend your whole life in puerility, childishness, running after petty things? Consider this! Answer! What is your response to the great question: "What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his spiritual life?" What is your answer? Are we responding?

When someone strikes the hour in the Bhajan Hall

verandah, does your heart tremble? One more hour has gone; my life has become depleted. Do you even hear the bells, let alone ponder over it, reflect over it? So much is *our pramada* (heedlessness), so much is our preoccupation with little things that we do not know what is happening. We are not aware. We do not know that days are passing, that with each sunset one more day has gone.

Our perception is gross, full of *tamas* and useless *rajas*. It is so gross that we do not perceive that which is right in front of us. We do not perceive the inner implication of things. Life bypasses us, its meaning lost on us. Could there be a greater tragedy, greater blunder, greater loss, greater folly than to neglect this golden opportunity, this rare chance that God has offered us? Who will be to blame if we throw away what God has given to us for petty trifles?

The one time Jesus demonstrated anger was when He entered the temple and saw traders and money-changers there. He made a whip and drove them out saying: "My Father's house is meant to be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers." Are you doing that to your own body-temple where the Father is enshrined? Are you doing similarly—taking a strong stand and driving out from this moving temple of the living God all that is unworthy of His presence?

Are you doing that? Are you doing this cleansing? Have you got that spirit within you? God forgive us if we reject the great gift that He has given to us out of His infinite love and compassion. Regret will be of no avail if we allow life to pass away not understanding its value, not caring to utilise this gift of God.

Let that not be your fate: to live in folly and regret at the end. Therefore, heed the call to "Arise, awake, become enlightened." There is no other way of proving your worth,

proving your mettle, proving what stuff you are made of. Are you made of steel or made of straw?

If we call ourselves *sadhakas*, spiritual people, if we really believe that we are children of Immortality, *amritasya putrah*, then it should be proved by the doing—by our living—not just with our lips.

Life does not stand still. If you grasp time by the forelock and utilise it, it is yours. Otherwise, it is not yours; it is finished. Life is not a thing to be idled away, to be allowed to go by in daydreaming and fanciful imaginations. It is something to be grasped with both hands and utilised.

Understand this very clearly. Then alone you will be the builder of a glorious future for yourself. Then alone you will be the designer of your highest welfare. May God help you do it! May Gurudev's perennial inspiration enable you to progress higher, upward and Godward day by day !

YOU MUST BE COMMITTED

There is one thing you should know about the spiritual life. No matter how sentimental you are about your faith, about your devotion and loyalty, about your aspiration to lead the sublime life, to make your life divine, no matter how much *bhavana* you may have, feeling you may harbour—it will lead nowhere, no achievement worthwhile will come out of it, until and unless you are committed to it. Above all things you must be COMMITTED to it.

There should be commitment, deep commitment, to a certain way of life, to the achievement of a certain goal, to living up to a certain ideal, to abiding by and adhering tenaciously to certain principles. For all this there should be commitment, a definite, clear, unambiguous commitment. There should be an earnest, fervent, forceful commitment. If commitment is there, it is able to overcome all obstacles; it is able to face all confrontations, all forces. It is able to withstand them and hold its ground through its authenticity, its genuineness. If commitment is not there, everything else may be there but you will find out for yourself what will happen.

Commitment is the very soul of spiritual life. Commitment is the very soul of dedication to any ideal. Commitment is a divine power; it is strength; it is a firm basis, unshakeable. Commitment is one thing that is required. But if you have allowed yourself to get committed to lesser things, lower things—thoughtlessly, foolishly, mindlessly—then finished, all your progress will come to a stop, to a standstill. This commitment to lesser things will be a deadweight. It will not allow you to rise up. You will be bound, shackled, held in thralldom, imprisoned.

Commitment to something lesser, something lower, can

also lead to dire consequences. That possibility should always be kept in mind. You must be clear as to what you are committed to. Again and again, our commitment must be re-examined. For example, due to selfishness, due to greed, due to the inability to control the senses, one commits oneself to falsehood and practises falsehood in a planned, careful, deliberate, continuous manner. Can there be any greater fall?

Therefore, there is need for heart-searching and once again changing one's commitment. If people living a spiritual life practise *asatya* (untruth) in a systematic, planned manner, deliberately, on purpose, continuously, then there is great danger; one is going down, down, down. And this commitment to falsehood is due to selfishness, to greed, to not wanting to control the senses, but wanting to pamper the senses, to satisfy them, to have so-called enjoyment in spite of the fact that Lord Krishna has warned: "*ye hi samsparsaja bhoga duhkhayonaya eva te*. (The enjoyments that are born of contacts are only wombs of pain for they have a beginning and an end)." They are sources of sorrow, *duhkha*, not of enjoyment.

A prisoner in close confinement does not have to exercise self-control. When you cannot get anything, you can be a perfectly self-controlled person. Self-control is when everything is available and you restrain yourself. That is self-control and that is more difficult. Very simply, someone said: "No gains without pains." We must not take the easy way. By the easy way we will not get freedom from sorrow, pain and suffering. We will not get supreme peace and bliss.

Self-control means strength. What do the Upanishads tell us? "*Nayamatma balahinena labhyah* (This Atman cannot be attained by one who is destitute of strength)." Thus there is need for self-examination; there is need to carefully avoid committing ourselves to lesser things, smaller things, which

the Upanishads call *alpa* (petty). Do not commit yourself to the *alpa* if you want to get the *mahat* (Supreme).

Moreover, we must consider how dangerous it can be if one is thoughtlessly, unwisely, sometimes obstinately committed to lesser things, lower things. The Nazis were committed to certain things. They were prepared to live and to die for them. They committed untold atrocities; they turned earth into hell. They believed in their commitment, but then, what a sad tragedy!

Due to their commitment, certain people in the western part of North India shot people every day. They killed irrationally, illogically, indiscriminately. They orphaned children, widowed wives, deprived parents of their children. It was because of their commitment.

These are extreme cases which may have no application to us, but that is not the point. The point is that there is a danger of committing oneself to things which are not sublime, not noble, but yet thinking that they are the highest. This is the delusion of *maya*. When intelligence, logic, rationality, cleverness, is divorced from Divinity, divorced from the *daivi*, divorced from that which is good, noble, sublime, high, pure, lofty, then you can see what happens. So, to bring home this possibility, this very real fact, extreme cases are cited.

Where there is *bhramanti* (delusion) due to *avichara* and *aviveka* (lack of enquiry and discrimination), due to the wrong type of company and a lack of the right type of company, due to no *svadhyaya* (spiritual study), due to no self-introspection, then we are firmly in the grip of *maya*, which makes the unreal appear to be real and makes us forget the Real. And one of the most dangerous aspects of *maya* is that in this condition the person thinks: "No, no, I am very wise. I know what I am doing. Who is anyone to tell me?"

And to describe this most extraordinary, paradoxical condition of a person being in full delusion yet thinking himself very clever, Sri Sri Ramakrishna said: "Such persons are like patients in typhoid delirium." With typhoid, the doctor insists that the patient should not eat any food, but the patient in his raving delirium keeps demanding food, and food of the richest and most indigestible type.

So we must beware. We must be alert, vigilant and full of fear. Yes, sometimes fear is good. Fear sometimes saves us from danger. Then it is a healthy, positive, constructive fear, not a destructive fear. Because, when overcome by desires, a strong desire, one has neither fear nor shame. It is said: "Fools rush in where angels fear to tread."

Be committed to the Highest

There is another danger. Sometimes people are neither committed to the highest, nor are they deliberately caught up in a lower commitment. Inside there is a blank; there is no commitment at all. That means there is no idealism, there is no purpose. Somehow or other they have come into the spiritual life, they find themselves in it. Are they committed? No. Do they have a purpose? No. Then why are they in it? "Oh, why go into all that? Somehow I find myself here." So, no commitment.

As you know very well, that means that each day they are at the mercy of any blowing wind. Anyone can persuade them to commit themselves to anything, because there is a blank there. They are at the mercy of forces all around them—persons, things, persuasions, attractions. For, if there is nothing there, anything can get in. You know the adage: "An idle brain is the devil's workshop." And, an idle life, an uncommitted life, can be equally the devil's territory.

Therefore, not to be committed at all is also a condition, an interior state of affairs, that should be put to an

end immediately. It is as urgent as if a fire has broken out in your room. Will you just be looking at it, slowly, taking your time, thinking what to do? No, immediately, somehow or other you will try to put it out—with a bucket of water, a blanket, anything, but put it out. So, if there is an empty life, a life that is not committed, that condition should not be allowed to remain.

Therefore, of these alternatives, the one thing desirable is to be committed to a sublime goal, to be absolutely, entirely, totally committed to a noble objective, to a lofty ideal. That is life, and that is supposed to be the *sadhaka's* life. A *sadhaka* is one who has chosen the highest: "I will opt only for the highest and the best, not even the second, not even Brahmaloaka. Even the status of Brahma the Creator, who is able to live a million years according to the *sastras*, is nothing to me. Ultimately it also has to come to an end. Before eternity, it is nothing." That is the spirit of the Upanishads. "No matter what it is, if it is anything other than *brahma-jnana*, Self-realisation, I reject it, I don't want it. Let anyone have it, I don't want it." That is the spirit!

Therefore, a *sadhaka's* goal is the highest of all goals imaginable. Lord Krishna says: "*yam labdhva ca'param labham manyate na 'dhikam tatah*—having obtained which, he thinks there is no other superior gain." What can there be higher than the Ultimate Reality? What can there be higher or greater than God?

When such is your good fortune, your uniqueness, that you are souls who have determined to come off the beaten track and to no longer conform to the humdrum pattern of earthly existence, having thus, by the grace of God, taken one's life in one's own hands and chosen an independent direction, having come into the vastness of the limitless skies of spiritual striving and attainment and then to become

restricted would be a very sad thing. They say that the sky is the limit. Here the sky is not the limit. It is something which is beyond even the limitless skies. For, from That even the skies originated. When this is so, it would be sad to unconsciously allow oneself to be persuaded that times have changed and thus lower one's commitment. For, you have not changed. A diamond is always a diamond, be it a million years ago or a million years hence. When you have not changed, how can your goal be changed? How can your ability to attain be changed when you are of God?

Thus, everything has been placed before you—the possibilities, the risks, the dangers. They say: "Forewarned is forearmed." All the scriptures tell us of all the dangers upon the path and warn of the pitfalls and risks to the human questing soul. Lord Krishna Himself says it in the Gita: "*trividham narakasyedam dvaram nasanam atmanah kamah krodhas tatha lobhas tasmad etat trayam tyajet*—Triple is the gate of this hell, destructive of the self—lust, anger and greed; therefore one should abandon these three." And in the eighteenth chapter He tells us: "I have told you everything that has to be known. I have given you all the facts, without reservation. Now it is for you to decide. If you do not listen to what I have said, then I am not responsible. Dire will be your destiny. But I am not going to force you. It is upto you."

Therefore, deeply dive within yourself and be clear as to what you are committed to. What are you living for? For what are you prepared to face anything? What are you even prepared to die for? That is the acid test. This is the crucial touchstone to judge the quality of your commitment, of your dedication. This is the very soul of spiritual life. This is everything about Yoga and Vedanta, and, of course, this is the very essence of true, honest discipleship, true, genuine devotion to the supreme, eternal, all-pervading Spirit, the

Reality behind all appearances, the now and here God. Therefore, do *japa* of this word commitment, commitment, commitment.

What does Gurudev say about Commitment?

Find out: What are you committed to? What are you living for? Are you committed to something very definite, very clear, very unmistakable? Ask yourself this question. Keep on asking until you are clear, until you are absolutely certain about your answer to this question. For according to your commitment, that will be your life.

Taking for granted that spiritual life does have a place of great importance in your thoughts about yourself and your goal and your living, we have to know something more specific, more definite, more clear and unambiguous, to which we may be committed. We have to start somewhere. Therefore, what does Gurudev have to say about our commitment? One does not really need to say, because it is self-evident.

First, be committed to a life where we put service before self, "Not I, but all Your creation, O Lord, and Yourself too." As Gurudev has said: "God first, world next, yourself last." Because, getting caught in the net of selfishness will nullify all spiritual aspiration and spiritual life, and in that blindness we will not at all see what we are doing. And there we will get stuck. There is no more dangerous pitfall than selfishness.

On the other hand, selfless service is a great purifier; it is the purifier necessary for us to enter real spiritual life. Therefore, from ancient times they have given this to us as a prescription for entry into spiritual life—selflessness, not thinking about oneself— "What can I do for others? In what way can I be helpful, in what way can I benefit other people with whom I am living, with whom God has put me, be they young or old, healthy or ailing? In what way can I be useful?"

This is Gurudev's pointer to us. Selflessness and a spirit of service is one principle and objective to which we may be committed in our day-to-day living.

Then, commit yourself to devotion to God and daily worship. Commit yourself to discipline, to self-control, control of the senses, conquest of the desires of the mind, inwardness, one-pointedness and unfailing daily meditation upon the Supreme. He has given us this human birth in order to meditate upon Him, to attain Him and become forever blessed. This is the purpose of human birth.

Lastly, but not leastly, be committed to Vedantic awareness through constant enquiry: "Who am I? What is this world? Am I this perishable cage of flesh and bones? Am I this nonsense of a mind that is ever bothering me, ever making me restless, never allowing me peace, creating complications, enslaving me? Am I this unreliable intellect? No! *Manobuddhyahankarachittani naham* (Neither am I the mind, nor the intellect, nor egoism, nor mind-stuff). I am Consciousness-Bliss, part of God." Thus, through enquiry, through discrimination between the Self and the non-Self, by identifying yourself with the Self and not with the non-Self, and through self-analysis and investigation attain God-realisation.

So, therefore, commit yourself to these four things which Gurudev has placed before us in a concrete way. Be committed to selflessness and the spirit of service; to devotion and a spirit of daily prayer and prayerful worship; to discipline of the mind and senses, making the mind inward, quelling its restlessness, making it one-pointed and meditating upon the Reality; and be committed to the pursuit of enquiry, discrimination, self-analysis, investigation and Self-realisation. Commit yourself to all of these as part of your day-to-day living. I am not speaking of some theoretical concept of life or

about an academic subject. No. Bring it as close to you as possible, now, here, into your everyday life from morning till night.

Then to support this spiritual striving, commit yourself to the triple spiritual principles of non-injury, truthfulness and purity of conduct and character. *Moksham icchasi chet tata vishayan vishavat tyaja, brahmacharyam ahimsa cha satyam piyushavad bhaja* (If you desire liberation, shun sense-objects as poison and observe the three supreme qualities of purity, non-injury and truthfulness as nectar).

Therefore, let us also cherish these three great principles, the virtues of compassion and kindness to all creatures; of self-control, the path of purity in thought, word and deed; and truthfulness. "Let even death overtake me, but I will not leave these three principles." In this way, take a pledge to abide by these three main principles. Then what power is there in the universe that can stop you from becoming God Himself, that can stop you from becoming divinely perfect, a perfect gem, a rare and unique phenomenon in this world, able to bless your own times, to bless your contemporary human society? There is no power on earth that can stop you from attaining the Highest, the supreme Goal, if you thus commit yourself to that which is divine, to that which is of God. May God bless you in this noble endeavour!

THE ALL-CONQUERING POWER

There is a denomination, a *sampradaya* (sect) of Hinduism, a certain philosophical school, which equates everything with a supreme, inexpressible cosmic power. And that cosmic power is envisaged, is regarded and worshipped and adored as the great universal Mother, the cosmic power whom they call *sakti*, *para sakti*. It is the primal power which was before anything else came into being, which alone was. It is *adi sakti*, the primal power; *para sakti*, the transcendental power; *maha sakti*, the great imponderable power. Whatever we see in this universe is but a manifestation of That.

Everything that we have in the form of any force, strength, power, is Her manifestation within and without. If we have strength in our limbs, it is because of Her presence within us. If we are able to think, the power of thought is Her manifestation within us. If we have the power of reasoning, intellect, it is the manifestation of the Cosmic Mother. If we have the power to feel and to comprehend the feelings of others, then it is the manifestation of Mother. If we have the power to recall long forgotten events from our memory bank and bring them out, that power is an aspect of the cosmic power of the Mother who dwells within us.

She is everything: physical strength, power to think, power to will, power to reason, logic, power to feel, to remember, power to visualise the past, present and future. It is the power of the Mother that makes the river to flow, wind to blow, fire to burn, great machines to work. She is the biting power of the mosquito, the hauling power of the elephant. *Sarvam saktimayam jagat* (The whole world is pervaded by the Universal Power).

A man may have vast wealth but be a miser and never

make use of it. If he never invests his wealth he will ever remain a poor man. His wealth will not develop and multiply. He cannot become wealthier and wealthier because he is not making use of what he has been given. He drags on a miserable existence. He does not even want to replace his old clothes. Not that he has no power, but he does not use it. On the other hand, an entrepreneur, a commercial magnate, goes on investing and continuously keeps working, and there is no end to his prosperity. He goes on progressing day after day, expands his empire. Why? Because he has put to use what he has. He has utilised, applied in a practical manner in his life, what he possesses.

Similarly, it is not that we do not possess, but if we do not apply, we remain where we are. The secret of success in any field of endeavour is industry and application and, above all, perseverance in this industry and application. You take up something, apply yourself to it, and don't stop until you reach the goal. Keep on, persevere. Continuous effort is the key to ultimate achievement. This is something that both Patanjali Maharshi and Lord Krishna, each in their own way, state very explicitly. Lord Krishna states it in the sixth chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita and Patanjali Maharshi expounds this principle when he deals with the fifth *anga* (limb) of Ashtanga Yoga, namely *dharana* or concentration.

Perseverance means not giving up, but with a calm, serene determination persevering till the end. And suppose the goal is not attained at the end of that perseverance? That is not at all important, for the one who has thus persevered has succeeded. That person has achieved success. Success is not in getting something. Success lies in not giving up. Success lies in perseverance till the end. That is the greatest achievement in life. *Yoga* is no exception to it. *Bhakti* is no

exception to it. The attempt to control the mind is no exception to it. The attempt to achieve concentration is no exception to it. The attempt to lead a good life is no exception to it. The attempt to control our senses, to attain victory over negative habits and cultivate and establish noble, positive habits is no exception to it. All yield to the mysterious power of persevering effort. It is an all-conquering force. It is an all-conquering force because it is a direct application of Divine Mother's presence in us. Nothing can stand before it. Everything yields to it, provided we persevere with utmost regularity.

In many places in rural India there is no machinery. So if they want to dig a well they use pickaxes and crowbars. In the beginning only the surface of the earth is disturbed, no impression is made. But they go on digging, digging, digging in the same place and soon there is a large hole getting deeper and deeper. Finally, due to their persevering effort and the application of strength exercised continuously, they have water. It may be at 12 feet, 15 feet, 20 feet or even more. But they got what they were after, even though originally it was not visible. They had only guessed that it must be there. And so it was nothing but the sheer result of persevering effort applied in one direction, with one objective, that brought about this consummation.

Each human individual, each *jivatma*, has been given the ability to attain anything that he wants and the power for it—physical, mental, moral, intellectual. The only thing is, you should have enthusiasm, you should have aspiration, you should have a desire. Then everything becomes possible, because you have been endowed with this strength which is not an ordinary strength. It is a manifestation of the supreme Cosmic Power.

There is a hymn to the Divine Mother in the Durga

Saptasati: *ya devi sarvabhuteshu buddhi-rupena samsthita, namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namah* — I bow to that supreme Divine Mother, the Goddess who resides within me, who exists within me as the power of the intellect; I bow to Her again and again and again. *Ya devi sarvabhuteshu smriti-rupena samsthita, namastasyai namastasyai namastasyai namo namah*—I bow to the supreme Goddess, the Cosmic Power who resides within me as the power of memory; I bow to Her again and again and again. Thus this particular hymn identifies the presence of the Cosmic Power in the individual in his various aspects, physical, psychological, etc.

Therefore, the power is with us. If we are not misers, if we apply or invest it by having a certain keen aspiration, by putting forth effort for an objective, by persevering in that objective with calm determination and keeping up this perseverance with utmost regularity, it yields results. That is the teaching.

Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj was very positive about this in his guidance to us. He always used to say: "Do not despair, there is nothing impossible for you. Everything is possible if you keep on persevering. Do not yield. Do not give up." And our scriptures abound in certain supreme examples like Bhagiratha, Savitri, Dhruva and others. These illustrations all try to point out to us, by example, what is possible.

You must benefit out of this truth about yourself. Reflect upon it. Know that you have within yourself the power to attain whatever you aspire after, provided you fulfil the conditions of perseverance, regularity in perseverance and a determination to persevere onward till the end!"

WITH WHAT YOU HAVE, MAKE THE HIGHEST AND BEST USE

There is an expression in the West: "Make do." It means that whatever we have, good or bad, we must make the best use of that. You must make do with what you have and not lament over what you do not have or fantastically imagine that one day you will have—and then you will be tops. Instead, you look at the hard facts, the ground reality, and make the best of what you have. You don't go on waiting for some fanciful future when everything is perfect. This is one of the defects of the mind—always looking for a time when everything will be ideal.

There is also a significant saying: "That to one who has, God will give even more—to overflowing." Its significance is that if you will thus make do with what God has given you, then automatically the Supreme Plenum, the *purnam*, starts giving you more and more, because having done the best that you can with what you already have, you have created conditions for being given more and for receiving more. Some mysterious cosmic law seems to start working and providing you with more and more, because you have deserved it by putting what you have to the very best and highest use.

You have not been neglectful. You have not treated with scant respect what you have already been endowed with. You have given it due recognition, due respect, due value and started making use of it in the best possible manner, which means that you have recognised the worth of what the Cosmic Being has already given you. This is no small thing!

Therefore, taking whatever we have, good or bad, in a holistic way, taking everything together, we apprise our NOW situation, our NOW endowments, abilities, capacities and faculties and say: "Yes, this is what I am at this point in time.

In God's own eternity, this is what I am. This is what I am and what I have, so let me put it to the highest and best use with all possible sincerity, keen interest, earnestness, dedication and enthusiasm." If this is done, what can you not achieve? There is nothing that you cannot achieve.

Right at the very beginning you will start progressing, moving forward. You will not look forward to something, but start moving forward. This is the great thing needful. This is the working of grace. In the context of Indian philosophy it is called *purushartha*.

So, in the light of this truth, how do we look at what we have? It is not to be disdained, turned away from, but looked at in totality. "Yes, this is what I have. God has endowed me with this thing called life with all its plus and minus. Yet, I have it. So let me sit up and see in what way I can make the very best use of myself and in what way I can make the very best use of life."

This means that you start looking at things in a totally different way: "Everything that I am and everything that life holds for me has some value in this approach I have now decided to take. So, let me no longer analyse and divide life into things that are helpful and not helpful, that are *sadhana* and not *sadhana*, that are spiritual and contrary to spiritual. No, I will take one hundred per cent of my life and see in what way I can turn each per cent to my advantage, how I can look at it in a different way and see in all of it a means of attaining the Goal, a means of Self-unfoldment, illumination and enlightenment. I will not classify or categorise things, nor try to fight against, reject or throw something away. I will take life as a whole and see everything in it as a possible plus factor kept there by God in His all-intelligence to help me.

"Yes, even when I commit some blunder and have to pay for it, I will make use of it: 'Now I know what I should not

have done and what it is I should do if such a situation arises tomorrow.' " So, the blunder has given you a valuable insight into life and equipped you with new knowledge. Therefore, even when you think something is to be very much regretted, a most unfortunate happening, it has great value for the future. It has alerted you to something that perhaps until that time you had not been aware of. So it has a plus value, it has a positive purpose, and, therefore, it is a factor helping your spiritual life and not the contrary.

In this way, everything, both the sum totality of what you are and the sum totality of what you feel have to be looked at in this way. Our entire dealing with both these factors, and when I say our entire dealing with both, I exactly say what I mean—that you are something more than life. You are something apart from this me which is all that you have.

So, when you know that you are something apart from this me, you don't get caught up in the me and say I. You know that this is also an endowment, and you begin to think in what way I can make use of this me and this life of mine. Both of them are factors that you, the real you, the eternal you, the essential you, can make use of.

And here we come ultimately to the great saying: "You are what your mind is." So, if you take this mental attitude, this new vision, this new way of looking at and approaching things, you say no to nothing and all things stand before you with a new meaning. Everything is a plus factor and you have to deal with them in a way in which they become endowments and assets, not liabilities and problems. You make use of them.

Herein comes the necessity of your thinking being backed up by the wisdom of your reasoning, your *buddhi*. By a little reflection, by a little discrimination you can go on making minus into plus and not even think of it as minus. "This is a plus point. At the moment I don't see the plus point, but let me

see where I can identify the plus point in this seemingly minus situation, both within me and in the life in which I am.”

Thus should be the wise, discriminating seeker and sadhaka's approach to life and the living of life. May God's grace and the blessings and benedictions of Gurudev give you the key to this—give you the key, guide your footsteps and enlighten your mind at every step.

THE OVERCOMING OF ONESELF

Gurudev has awakened us to the pearl of great price, the supreme value. He has shown us a sublime and higher ideal to live for which brings a great, lofty significance to our life. There is a deep meaning and a lofty, sublime purpose behind life. Life is not existence, not striving, not survival; life is attainment, it is achievement, a glorious culmination.

When this is understood and realised, life becomes worth living. Each day becomes full with deep significance and meaning. Each day becomes an adventure, as it were, in the overcoming of oneself and the overcoming of seemingly adverse circumstances which are, in truth, opportunities to help us to overcome ourselves.

Such overcoming is indeed the greatest of all victories. Overcoming others may not be too difficult. Status, power, authority, wealth, superior personality, domination, strength—ever so many factors—can help one. And there are also urges to overcome others, such as ego-trip, prestige, self-satisfaction, a peculiar type of irrational, illogical sense of achievement. But all these factors—which in the ultimate analysis are hollow, non-productive and negative—are not there in the overcoming of oneself.

There is no question of privilege in the overcoming of oneself. One is only too conscious of how hollow one is. More than anyone else in the whole world, one is only too acutely aware of one's own defects, one's own drawbacks, imperfections and insufficiency. The whole world may see a golden image. The golden image is aware of its clay feet.

Where there is introspection, there is humility. Where there is deep and sincere self-analysis, there is a true appraisal of one's own inadequacy. And out of this appraisal, out of this realisation of one's inadequacy, springs the urge

for overcoming, for working diligently, for perfecting oneself.

If, lacking introspection, analysis and humility, one sees only all that is good in oneself, then all evolution, progress, self-overcoming and self-improvement comes to a stop. One becomes complacent and self-sufficient. There is no greater risk and danger in the spiritual life than such complacency and self-sufficiency. It is a great bar, a hurdle that has to be overcome.

Out of this realisation of what one truly is springs forth a great desire, a great determination and strong resolve: "No, I shall overcome—not anything outside of me, but everything inside of me that needs to be overcome. It will be 'do or die.' I shall overcome and I shall succeed come what may. For that is the only purpose for which life has been given to me. I shall not rest until I have succeeded, for I know that the perfection that has to be achieved is already within me. I have to rediscover it; I have to uncover it; I have to activate it; I have to manifest it. This is what life is. Therefore, I have not far to seek, but I have work to do!"

Seeking, questing are words used for lack of more suitable words. They are words taken from the context of the external space-time dimension of one's life, where, when one loses something, one has to find; one seeks here, there, everywhere. Lacking other terms, we make use of these words also in regard to the mystical inner dimension of our spiritual being, even though they do not convey within the same meaning that they convey in the outer dimension.

There is no seeking. There is nothing that is lost. Everything is found. Only we are not aware that it is there. There may be a finding, but there is no seeking. If an old grandfather has pushed his spectacles upon his forehead and then hunts all over for them thinking he has lost them, he needs to discover or be told: "You have not lost them. They

are right there." Even so, you have only to rediscover, to remember, recollect, remove this Self-forgetfulness. That is the situation in the spiritual life.

Therefore, indeed, this is a mysterious inward journey, an attainment of a thing which has never been non-attained. For you are the Being whom you are seeking. You are already That which you want to be. But great effort is required to discard the persistent wrong idea that you are something else.

And the essence of this is the word persistence. You have to persevere and you have to persist. If you stop breathing, in a short time you will cease to exist biologically. Even so, to put an end to Self-forgetfulness, to the alienation of oneself from one's own true, essential, eternal Self—to discard the hollow, erroneous wrong notion of a spurious, transitory, non-existent identity—effort should be kept up in an unbroken stream of a newly awakened consciousness.

In the depth of your own newly awakened self-awareness (where time stops and you are permanently yourself) this parallel, inward, unseen stream has to be there—dynamic in its continuity, non-stop in its unbroken flow—at all times, even while eating, drinking, sleeping, working, or resting.

Towards this end are all teachings. And they call it the highest knowledge. The highest knowledge of a being is knowledge of one's own Self. Therefore, one needs to be awake among sleepers, vigilant among the heedless, ever active among the slothful, living in a perpetual dawn and day where night has no place.

And, in this effort great overcoming is necessary to push away the persistent recurrence of habitual contrary thinking in the wrong direction. That is all. The awakened higher self has to stand in contradiction and opposition to the petty lesser self which rules the interior at present due to the

momentum of past habit carried over through births.

There should be the cessation of this stream of error and the springing up of the fountain of truth which must rule the interior in an unbroken stream ever moving towards its source, the great ocean of *satchidananda*, that is here and now.

May the grace of the Supreme and the loving benedictions of the Master grant you the gift of this life of ever-awakened awareness, so that your life may be full of light, so that you may really live !

THE WORLD IS NOT OUR ENEMY !

Our goal is the one non-dual Supreme Being. However, we live our spiritual life in the midst of this outer world. We are obliged, therefore, to function not only in the inner spiritual world, but in the outer spiritual dimension—which is manifest as something gross, material, physical, with varied multiplicity.

Placed amidst these two seemingly different factors, we are required to consider the mutuality and interaction between the two. Are they to be tolerated and suffered as a negative, minus factor in our life, or are they to be understood in a different light? Are they meant to be understood, utilised and profited from in a way that, in spite of duality, there is no contradictory dichotomy between the two ?

In this connection, is there something that nature has to offer us, some insight, some guidance? Where there are dual factors, is opposition inevitable, or do dual factors provide two halves that ultimately go to make a whole—they complement and complete each other? What exactly is the situation?

In the Gita we are told that we have to deal with the three *gunas* because we are in *prakrti*, cosmic nature. And *prakrti* is made out of the three *gunas*. So they are part of our life. *Sattva guna* takes one upward, *rajas* plies on the horizontal plane and *tamas* takes one downward. Seeming opposition, but the great insight given to us is that all three are necessary and each has a legitimate function. They are indispensable.

And if we observe nature, we see that a tree is able to exist on a piece of ground because its roots go deep into the soil. At the same time the roots tend to make the ground hold firm and strong. The roots provide, as it were, a framework, while it is the ground that enables the tree to stand firmly and strongly. There is a duality, yet it seems to be to the advantage of both. The ground is necessary for the tree; the tree also gives

something to the ground.

We are surrounded by a world of many things. Are they necessary? Are they unnecessary? Are they so many obstacles to our spiritual evolution? What exactly are they? If they are unnecessary, God would not have put them there. If they are necessary, they must have a purpose. What is their purpose? To hamper our spiritual progress? To become so many obstacles, so many troubling factors? We must think deeply over this and benefit out of this reflection.

Sometimes seemingly opposing factors serve a purpose: They arouse from within us certain faculties, certain determinations, certain plus factors like strong resolution—"I must overcome this!" They offer a challenge, and you are meant to exercise your intelligence—how to meet the challenge and overcome it. They are factors that make many positive things happen within our psyche. We take it as a challenge; we use our intelligence to ponder, "How can we deal with this?" They bring about the power of resolution and determination: "I must deal with it!"

So they are stimulators of many things from within, which otherwise would not be stimulated. We would be dull and drab. Thus, because they stimulate the inner aspect of our being, *antahkarana*, they don't seem to be entirely negative. They do serve a positive purpose, a constructive purpose, that goes beyond mere mutuality or interaction. They seem to have a positive purpose.

Without a pair of oars, the boat cannot move. Without the boat, the oars are useless; they serve no purpose. When both are together, they help us to cross the river. The upper and lower teeth are not at war against each other. Both are necessary if we wish to chew our food properly. Perhaps this is how we should view our life and things and factors, both outer and inner. God is all-intelligence. He would not have committed an error, a blunder.

All other forms of life, no matter how strong, how dynamic, how well endowed they are, when they are moving forward and come across a formidable obstruction, change their direction. Man alone asks how he can scale it, how he can overcome it. He does not think of changing his direction. He thinks of continuing his onward movement. If a river comes, build a bridge to cross it! If a mountain obstructs a railroad, bore a tunnel through it! Perhaps this has something to teach us. Man alone does this—no other creature.

Thus, all things have been provided because they are necessary. They test us, try us: How far are we really sincere? How far are we determined? What is the quality of our aspiration—how authentic, genuine and true? Therefore, they are necessary. They offer challenges. They also offer us a way of estimating our spiritual life. They thus become contributors to our meaningful progress.

If we thus begin to understand them and view them, our reaction to them will also change. We will not be so frequently overcome by despondence or be taken aback and doubt the possibility of moving forward when these negative things come and bother us. We will not lose confidence and be disheartened when we begin to see that all these things are necessary. They come to test and train us, to arouse from within us dormant faculties. They are challenges.

When seen as such, a whole new vision dawns upon you. Your approach to them is an intelligent one. All reactions to them become positive; your entire life, in addition to your spiritual life and *sadhana*, takes on a new attitude and nature. It no longer reacts in a negative way. It reacts in a positive way: "God has sent these things; they are necessary. I must try to understand in what manner I can gain, in what manner I can utilise them."

The whole approach, therefore, is not one of diffidence or trepidation or insecurity and doubt. The whole approach is

very positive and understanding. It is creative and constructive, and the very approach itself is constituted as a forward movement. This is the light in which we should view the world in which we have to live and to carry on our spiritual *sadhana*. Then the world is seen with a different meaning; it is not a foe or an enemy.

But then, why have the scriptures painted the contrary. They call it *maya*, a trap, bondage. They call it a jungle in which you will become lost, a net in which you will be caught. There is a purpose. It is all to make us move cautiously and carefully. That is all. Because if you are not intelligent and perceptive, then due to your non-perception and lack of discrimination, you may make them into binding factors. Not that they are there as binding factors. They are just there to tell us: "Here are things of value, but if you don't deal with them properly they may become liabilities. Therefore, open your eyes, move forward cautiously and carefully."

When humanity was in a much lower scale of evolution and human intelligence had not evolved, perhaps it was necessary to paint that negative picture, but it is no longer necessary. So if we allow remnants of that to still continue in our life, it is because it is good to be cautious while we boldly move forward. It is good to exercise a degree of care in living our spiritual life. That much we must see while we make this world and all the things in it a valuable part of our training and spiritual education.

Thus, the way the world has to be dealt with, so that it may cease to become our enemy and obstacle, is to add to the mutuality and the interactive situation a positive attitude and approach—the utilisation of all these various things for our own benefit. May the grace of God and the benedictions of the guru enable us to do this intelligent act and profit thereby. God bless us all!

DAILY LIFE : A TEST OF INNER SADHANA

Gurudev has blessed us with a facility which provides the scope and possibility for all the four *yogas*. He has given us a field for the exercise of body, mind, intellect, and the spirit. This is a place of total unfoldment for your entire being from the least to the supreme. It is a centre of evolution from the human state to the state of transcendental illumination and blessedness. It is a bridge from humanity to Divinity.

For those who can perceive and utilise it as such, this valuable gift of Holy Master—this ashram—can be to them a ladder to enlightenment, total divine perfection, liberation and eternal blessedness. For this is what it is if it is always approached, not from an imperfect human angle, but from an awakened spiritual angle and an enlightened divine angle.

It is this way for the simple reason that Gurudev worked to create this ashram for this specific purpose. He gave utterance to the fact that he had provided here a total field and scope for our evolution. If we will approach it as such, shedding all inhibitions, clearing ourselves of preconceived notions and overcoming our intense preoccupation with our own human centre—which is a centre of opinions, conceptions, built-in reactions, prejudices and bias—then everywhere we turn we will see that this entire ashram is a rare gem, a rare gift for total evolution and perfection.

Even the seeming negative factors—which in our lesser human-nature-based and biased perception appear to be so many obstacles, problems and impeding factors hampering our progress—will suddenly be seen as valuable occasions and opportunities for us. They are to be made use of. They are chances given to test ourselves. They are neither to be suffered, nor borne, nor endured, but they are to be

understood and made use of for our benefit, our highest good.

This ashram duplicates life as a whole. In whichever environment and situation we have been placed by the will of the Divine, the factors present in it are necessary for us as we are at this given time and place to enable us to work towards our perfection. For, each one of us has many things to be overcome, renounced and discarded; and a particular situation and circumstance is given to us as an opportunity for liberating ourselves from that which is holding us back from progressing towards our divine destiny.

If we thus perceive and understand life with a true spiritual vision, then our entire reaction to things that come to us day by day will be a creative reaction, a keen, analytical reaction: "What has this in it for me? God has given it with a definite plan and purpose. In what way can I gain from this situation, benefit myself and surge ahead? It does not come without meaning." Thus, each situation, each set of circumstances each day, comes because that is the need for that day.

Our outer life and our inner spiritual life of *japa*, meditation, introspection, contemplation, reflection and concentration have a close, indispensable connection. They are necessary for each other. Our inner spiritual disciplines require to be tested for their authenticity, their genuineness, their effectiveness; and the scope and possibility for this is provided each waking day from dawn till dusk.

Daily life is an opportunity provided for us to exercise the spirituality gained during our inner studies, reflection, *japa* and meditation. It is the testing ground, so that each day our progress is really ours. We have made it our own by having tested it, proven it and possessed it. Until it has been tested and proven, it is not our own, it does not become part of us.

Every spiritual step forward becomes assimilated into

your nature when it is thus exercised. That which is exercised actively becomes firmly grounded, permanently and truly your own. Thus there is an indispensable connection between your daily *sadhana* and your daily life.

It is in the context of daily life that you are able to actively exercise and test your spiritual progress. It is in the context of your daily *sadhana* that day by day the quality of your daily life is enhanced and enriched—it becomes further elevated to progressively ever higher dimensions of culture, refinement and a transformed spiritual nature. Ultimately, of course, this process—the daily enrichment of your outer life by the daily ascent of your spiritual inwardness—culminates in a total divinisation of your being and doing, your actions and reactions.

May we thus see this unified nature of our inner and outer life and not see them as two separated, mutually exclusive and opposed aspects. They are not two. They are one integrated and unified process of spiritual evolution.

One who perceives this becomes a totally balanced individual. He becomes truly possessed of the knowledge of the art and science of living life as one unified process of evolving day by day spiritually. And for us, the relevance of this spiritual fact is a necessary part of the understanding of this ashram life which we are leading, and all the factors that go to make up both the inner and outer life.

May the grace of the Divine and the blessings of Master enable us to see ourselves as what we are and to see our life and our environment for what it is. Thus, may this dual knowledge become a means of your steady spiritual progress and evolution into ultimate illumination and liberation!

TRANSCEND YOUR ENVIRONMENT

Radiant Immortal Atman ! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! The human mind is influenced and affected by all things that surround it. It is also equally true that the human mind, with its various moods and varying states, has an affect upon all things around it. Your mind is affected by people, things and occurrences, sights and sounds around you. Equally you keep on affecting everybody, everything, wherever you go.

If you are sitting beside a very calm, serene, collected person, a centre of serenity and calm, the vibrations radiating from that person, the aura emanating from that person, puts your mind also into a state of relative, comparative calmness. Even if you are by nature prone to be very agitated and restless, nevertheless, for the time being, to an appreciable extent, the calm goes into your mind. On the other hand, if you are sitting near a very high-strung, tense, agitated person, then you are likely to gradually feel uncomfortable and begin to feel somewhat agitated and restless.

This is the power of anything into whose proximity you place yourself. If you place yourself close to a fire, you will start feeling warm, even uncomfortable. If you are close to something very cold, you will be influenced by it. Different types of features and factors, certain odours, certain sights, immediately create a certain strain of thought or feeling within. Therefore, to a very great extent we are swayed and influenced by outside factors.

There is an important point here that you have to ponder with great earnestness, with great understanding. If you have to be constantly amidst various things, various persons and different environmental situations, does it mean that you can never be stable? Must your mind also be in a

constant state of instability, always changing, always being influenced, always being made serene or made agitated, always producing some reaction?

Are you merely a bundle of reactions? Have you no personality of your own? Have you no intrinsic, basic, fundamental born nature which may be influenced but which also remains constant? It cannot be! Each one is born with a certain innate nature, inborn nature. One has a certain constant individual nature. From the highest standpoint that innermost, innate nature is divinity. It is *sat-chit-ananda*. Ultimately you have to find that centre and become fixed in it. It requires much effort, but from another angle it requires no effort, it should not require any effort at all, because it is that which you are already. But we have been so long accustomed to wrong thinking, that to get rid of that wrong thinking becomes the real task before us. We have indulged in wrong thinking since our birth. It has become a habit pattern, not our nature but a habit pattern. To change this habit pattern and liberate ourselves from this wrong thinking may take some time. It may spread over a period, but that does not matter. That should not deter us from calmly and silently initiating a process of right thinking, and as and when the wrong thinking reasserts itself, due to habit, calmly rejecting it, turning away from it, affirming our reality. That becomes the thing needful. That becomes the process of liberation. That becomes the process of transcendence, of rising above. And if this process is kept up, then ultimately the habit pattern of the wrong thinking way of life gradually recedes into the distance and ultimately vanishes.

This process is an inner process. In following this process you must know that it is Truth that will ultimately assert and manifest Itself, because It is positive. Erroneous thinking, being a negative thing, cannot persist for a long time.

We do not realise that we have to purposively take ourselves by the hand and initiate this process of transformation. If this process is started it will start giving effects. It will begin to manifest itself and bring about a desired transformation. But in the vast majority of people this process is never purposively taken up and carried on. Therefore, even after years and decades of *sadhana*, we still continue to remain what we were. That is because, together with our other *sadhana*, this inner transformation has never been attempted, this inner transformation has never been seriously pursued and effected. This is subjective *sadhana* within the interior of your own *antahkarana*, and day after day it must be simultaneously going on along with your *japa*, or meditation, or *kirtan*, or reading, or *satsang*, or asanas, or *pranayama*.

In this you have to understand an important truth. Even though environmental factors and features, occurrences or individuals may have an influence upon you—you may be irritated or frightened by someone, or you may feel a state of alienation or actual hostility from someone else; or you may feel kindness and composure from another person—nevertheless, if only you wish, you can successfully make yourself immune to these outer influences.

What is the key to understanding this? It is simply this: even though in the natural state it is a fact that the individual is affected by his environment, in the ultimate analysis it is the individual that endows these factors with the power to influence him. It is only if you give credence to the reality of these things, if you focus on them, give too much importance to these outside factors, that you expose yourself, make yourself constantly open and vulnerable to the influence that these things exert.

If you are practising *pratyahara* or withdrawal of the mind according to Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga, then you will

find that things which once had a very powerful effect on you are no longer affecting you. Why? Because you are in a state of inwardness. You thus succeed in becoming introspective. Then the exaggerated focusing of attention upon things, occurrences and people outside, endowing them with too much importance, will gradually lessen. Because your attention, instead of being directed towards things, people and events outside, is directed inwardly, where there is the eternal centre of peace, stability, strength, light, power and wisdom.

Therefore, how much your environment will influence you is a thing that is not decided by the environment; it is decided by you. If you are wise, if you invoke in your mind *viveka* and *vichara* (discrimination and right enquiry) and resolutely turn the mind inward, then the outer environment becomes powerless to affect you, to influence you, or to keep changing you and agitating you. On the other hand, if you continue to regard these outer things as terribly real, as very, very important, as having power over you, then they will have power over you; they will go on constantly shaking you, influencing and affecting you.

Vedanta makes quite clear that this world, and all things in it, is only a long drawn out dream. It is temporary, it is an appearance only. So you should regard these outer things as ultimately not being very important to you: "Why should I unnecessarily distress myself too much over them? What does it matter what some person is thinking about me? Let that person think; it is his problem, not my problem." Because, if you keep thinking about other people's thoughts, you completely expose yourself to agitation and distress. So, if instead of being concerned about what other people may think of you, if you think about the indwelling reality, the indwelling splendour, the indwelling *satchidananda*, then you will come out triumphant. In all environments your mind will be

in a state of *satchidananda*, in a state of peace and bliss. So, it is not what people think that affects you; it is, rather, what you think.

Therefore, mind your thought. Be wise, and wisely direct the thought within, into the centre of your being. Thus you can triumph over your environment and soon become established in a state of peace, poise, stability and joy.

SEE THE GREAT REALITY EVEN IN OBSTACLES

Worshipful homage unto Thee, Thou eternal, all-pervading and indwelling cosmic Spirit Divine! May Your grace be upon all those sincere seeking souls who are assembled here in Your divine presence! Grant them the blessedness of an unceasing aspiration, and a determined resolution to fulfil this aspiration, no matter what the obstacles, what the difficulties, what the adverse circumstances.

Grant them the insight, the vision and the wisdom to see in these obstacles necessary disciplines that are meant to strengthen their inner sinews, necessary disciplines that are meant to awaken in them their hidden powers which may then be manifested and exercised for this great attainment.

May they not see adverse circumstances as adverse circumstances or obstacles as obstacles. Grant them the vision and the wisdom to see them as opportunities, to see You present as obstacles, not thinking them to be the manifestation of something opposed to You, contrary to You, a second factor, a cosmic dichotomy. For we are within the tradition of the great sages and seers of the Vedas and the Upanishads. We believe in a supreme, transcendental, absolute, non-dual Reality, which does not admit of any eternal cosmic dichotomy between the Divine and the undivine, the plus and the minus.

For us *sarvam khalvidam brahma; ekameva'dvitiyam brahma; brahmaiva satyam; ekam sat*—All this is Brahman; Brahman is one alone, without a second; Brahman alone is Truth; Truth is one. Therefore, grant them, by Your grace the wisdom to perceive the one great Reality even in the form of seeming obstacles.

Difficulties are not difficulties to those who are resolute and determined. The boatman who has to row across the

flowing river only knows that hard rowing is necessary. He does not deem the rapid flowing of the river to be an obstacle. He just knows that he has to make it to the other shore. The only awareness in his mind is the need to persist in putting forth ever greater power until the other shore has been reached.

In this way, may Your grace manifest in them as resolute determination, as a vision and wisdom with which they face, accept and welcome everything that life is, and see in everything Your own manifestation, manifesting as an opportunity and an occasion for putting forth greater effort and as a situation brought in order to serve as a discipline through which to generate greater strength, to come out stronger.

Thus may Your grace manifest in them in these positive ways as spiritual qualities that will train them for the total perfection which is their great destiny!

Loving adorations to revered and beloved Holy Master who thus faced in his own spiritual life all that confronts a *yogi* or a monastic or a *sadhaka* upon this rugged path, and who emerged as a highly disciplined and determined Yogi and Vedantin. He not only emerged stronger, wiser and even more determined than ever, but greatly ripened and mellowed, with sympathy for seekers for all times, knowing through his own personal experience what they may have to face, may have to overcome, and may have to go through.

He used to say that suffering instills mercy and compassion in the human heart. Having undergone the same experience one is able to know and sympathise with the sufferings of others.

May his benedictions and glance of grace instil in us a sympathy and an understanding of the problems of *sadhakas*; and, above all, may it bring before us the necessity to generate

from within ourselves a great perseverance, a powerful determination and a firm resolution. For these are our friends and assets on this rugged path. It is not only rugged, it is arduous. It is not a short cut, but a lengthy, continuous journey unto the last.

It therefore requires great patience, great fortitude. One should not think of its length, but as the wise Chinese philosopher said: "The longest journey is but one step." Keep on taking this one step without stopping, without lagging behind, without sitting by the wayside, without wandering into the bypath of the pursuit of pleasure or satisfaction.

If we keep on taking that one step, no matter how rugged or arduous the path, then one day we are destined to reach that Goal Supreme. We are made to claim and obtain our birthright, our divine destiny. This is the truth.

LOOKING AT PROBLEM FROM A DIFFERENT ANGLE OF VISION

Sometimes a seeker will ask him or herself a question : Why is it that a spiritual seeker seems to be plagued with so many vexing problems, obstacles, hurdles and various complicated situations that do not seem to be present in the life of a normal human being going about his secular vocation? He may have some problems with income tax or getting his child admitted in a proper school, but he does not have too many deep problems and complications in the inner dimension of his subjective life.

The answer is because spiritual life is going against the stream of life. It is like the difference between a person swimming downstream, going along with the current and a person swimming upstream against the current. So naturally the person swimming upstream has a great deal of counterforce to overcome, whereas the person going downstream need not make much effort. They take the means of least resistance, so flow along. This is an explanation of why you have these problems.

You have set yourself a great goal, and to move towards it with the minimum of difficulty, one method is to walk in the footsteps of the great ones who have gone before. They went the same way, lived the same life, encountered many difficulties and attained the Goal. Follow the steps they took to overcome everything until they reached the Goal. So contemplate the lives of saints. Keep them as your ideal, see their life and draw inspiration. Be guided by their wisdom teachings also. They have given their life as an ideal, and they have left valuable pointers through their own personal teaching and words of advice. We get all these things from the lives of saints. So keeping the life of some ideal saint as

your inspiration and guidance is the wise method of progressing upon this path.

A second method of sometimes dissolving what appears to be a big difficulty, a hurdle on the way, is to look at it with a different angle of vision. Say: "No, this is not a problem. This situation is necessary for me. God knows my degree of evolution, where I stand. At this point in my spiritual evolution, this is what I require in order to learn many insights and to put forth my inner resources so that I may progress further."

This, therefore, is another way of looking at a problem. Welcome it! "This is necessary for me, therefore, it is coming. Otherwise, it would not come. If I go into a higher dimension or plane of evolution, then such things will not come because I have already gone beyond them. I don't need them."

Thus, we take the problem not as a problem, but as an opportunity, an occasion, to manifest whatever inner resources we have developed up till now through our spiritual life and spiritual *sadhana* and practice—our dispassion, whatever we have learned. Now we have to test it in the field. Therefore, the situation, the seeming problem is giving us just that opportunity to test how far we are well established in our progress. We take it as a challenge, an opportunity to convince ourselves that we are well established in whatever we have gained thus far—we are not standing on a foundation of sand, but of rock.

So, take everything in a creative attitude, in a positive and constructive attitude. This is the way to keep up enthusiasm and thus thrive in your spiritual life. See the inner value of these situations; know that they are important and necessary and that we can gain from them! May God bless us all!

STEADFASTNESS IN SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Blessed and beloved children of the Divine ! *Nishtha* means steadfastness, establishment in a certain state. It is a word which does not find a place in *raja yoga* or in the description of *bhakti yoga*. In a specific manner it is not a part of your *sadhana*, yet throughout the individual seeking soul's spiritual life, it is the key, it is the key to success in his *abhyasa* (practice), in his *sadhana*.

Whether you are a Vedantin, whether you are a *bhakta*, whether you are a *raja yogin*, whether you are a *karma yogin*, whatever path you are following, whatever *sadhana* you are doing, whatever *abhyasa* you are engaged in, you must be firmly centred in it, and you must refuse to be drawn out of it by any temptation, attraction, any outer force or factor, whether it be an object or a thing, a person, a situation or an enjoyment—by anything in this outer, created universe. After all, what is this created universe? It is but an accumulation of *vruttis* and things, of names and forms and it is an accumulation of various tempting experiences—you can smell through the nose, taste through the tongue, see through the eye, hear through the ear, or touch through the skin.

The pilgrims who are passing by on the way to Nilakanth are not concerned with Haridwar or Rishikesh or Sivananda Ashram. They have come from villages hundreds of miles around in order to reach Nilakanth. They are only intent upon Nilakanth, reaching Nilakanth, carrying water for Lord Mahadev. Of course, if you ask them where they are going they may tell you, or if a car is coming they will move out of the way. But all that they will do automatically; they are not concerned about it. Their main concern is Nilakanth. They

have *nishtha*, their whole attention is fixed upon Nilakanth.

Even so, you are a traveller upon this earth. You are a pilgrim soul; you have a destination to reach and you are moving towards it. While you are moving towards it, if you allow yourself to be attracted towards some external thing, fall into a temptation, allow yourself to be diverted into a bypass by some attraction, or by some delusion thinking that it is important, or by some idle curiosity or by day-dreaming or giving exaggerated importance to something other than your destination, then you are delayed, your progress is stopped.

Therefore, like a person with a definite destination, resolutely moving towards it and not allowing himself to be distracted or diverted hither and thither, a *sadhak* or a *bhakta* or a Yogi is a person of *nishtha*. He is firmly centred in the Self or absorbed in *bhakti bhav* and devotional practices, absorbed in the *ishta* or completely dedicated to an inner state of meditation, always in a state of meditation. But, nevertheless, he would be fulfilling all the necessities of worldly life, seemingly a part of the scene, but never really a part of the scene.

Even so, be rooted in the Self. Be firmly established in your ideal. Be firmly established in your quest. Be firmly established in your *abhyasa*. Be firmly established in your resolve. Do not budge from it. Do not allow anything to draw you away from the central quest. That is the hallmark of a *uttama adhikari* (best qualified aspirant), of a true *sadhak*.

Again and again in his writings and teachings, Gurudev used the terms determination, tenacity, fixity and firm resolution. Become firmly established, never letting go of the centre, never letting go of the vision of the Goal. No matter how complicated a particular day might be, ever be established in the centre of your life, the quest, the ideal for which you

are living. That should not in anyway be affected or altered. The inner promptings of your *antahkarana*, your consciousness, should always be the same: abidance in God, becoming totally established, *nishtha*. *Nishtha* in your *abhyasa*, *nishtha* in your *sadhana*, *nishtha* in your Yoga and *eka-nishtha bhav* in all that you do—that is very, very necessary.

Not only is this *nishtha* necessary for continuously moving towards the Goal and succeeding, it is also very, very necessary as a great armour, a great protection against influences that may try to draw you away from the path. When you are abiding in the Self, when your whole attention is centred upon *yoga abhyasa* and your *sadhana*, your inner way, then you have no time to be diverted by others. A hundred different forces or influences or attractions may be around you, but you are not aware, because you have no interest in them, you are no longer concerning yourself with them. Why? Because you have developed *nishtha*, you are practising *nishtha*.

Nishtha is your great boon. *Nishtha* is to be cultivated diligently and firmly adhered to. Continuously strive to strengthen your *nishtha*. That is your guarantee against all failure, all downward pull, all backsliding. *Nishtha* is your wealth, *nishtha* is your strength. *Nishtha* will be your sure protection.

PERSEVERANCE AND ASPIRATION LEAD TO SUCCESS

When spiritual aspirants, seekers and *sadhaks* are looking for guidance, when they are seeking clarification and some advice about their difficulties and doubts, the ultimate advice that is usually given is, "Whatever you are engaged in doing, continue to do it, but make it gradually progressive. Do more and more of it. Increase your *sadhana*, and persevere in your *sadhana*. This is the way."

Impatience does not help in any way. In any journey you have to cover the distance between where you are and your destination. If you are eager to reach the destination early, then increase your pace and speed a little more. In addition, cover a comparatively greater distance each day than you have been doing hitherto. That may mean walk more hours than you have been doing. If you have been walking six hours a day, walk seven, may be eight hours. It is thus that a traveller will be able to fulfil his desire to reach the destination earlier.

Even so, a *sadhaka* in the spiritual life, on the path of *sadhana*, should gradually increase and persevere in his *sadhana*, be it *japa*, be it meditation, be it study, be it praying to the Lord, be it remembering Him in the midst of your duties and work. Do not let any doubt become an obstacle in your path. Let the doubt be there, you carry on your *sadhana* with greater vigour. This very act itself sometimes helps in clearing up doubts. What we could not understand a little while before, we begin to understand as we continue our *sadhana* and make it more progressive.

All want to succeed in the spiritual life. This is but natural, and success is achieved by adhering to our spiritual *sadhana* and enhancing it. Continue to do what you are doing

and do more and more of it. This is the one sure way of ultimately succeeding in attaining the goal of life—continuous, unceasing movement towards the great Goal. Persevere and augment your *sadhana* day by day, and you have the key to sure attainment of the great Goal.

By analogy, it is this continuity and onward progress that makes each river ultimately attain the ocean. No matter what the obstacles that come in its way, it circumvents them and goes onward. Our ancients also compared this continuity to the flow of oil from one vessel to another. Just as the oil flows in an unbroken, continuous stream, so should one's inner spiritual life and *sadhana* be.

In addition, keep your aspiration alive and blazing. Mystics and saints have spoken about this great longing by giving human analogies from everyday society and life. If your longing for God, if your desire for meeting the Lord is as keen, as intense, as that of an unfaithful wife longing to secretly meet her lover, if your longing for God is like that of a miser constantly thinking of ways and means to accumulate more wealth, if your longing for God is like the longing of a sensuous person hankering day and night after sense enjoyments of various kinds, then surely you will attain God-experience, you will attain God, you will come face to face with the Supreme Being.

Along this line, one mystic came forward with this assurance: "If you have the intensity of longing for God of these three—the secret longing of the unfaithful wife, the longing of the miser and the longing of the sensual person thirsting after sensual pleasure—and do not attain the Lord, I stand responsible. I give my guarantee." Many of the mystics of both East and West embodied in themselves such longing.

It all adds up to saying that we should not be lukewarm. We should become the very personification of that longing. We should become in our total nature that longing personified.

This is the inner truth of all spiritual life and *sadhana*. This should be the inner content of the *sadhaka's* heart.

We should ponder deeply and become benefited by dwelling upon these truths about the life mystical—a life of devotion, perseverance and aspiration. May the grace of the Divine and the blessings of Holy Master enable us to become such an aspirant and seeker and enable us to keep this before us as a touchstone and ideal.

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

Radiant Immortal Atman! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine! You are assembled in the spiritual presence of Gurudev, who is the source and origin of this Ashram, the source and origin of the spirituality that pervades the atmosphere of this Ashram, who is the source and origin of the divine way of life that he proclaimed as a *sadhana* for Self-realisation for modern mankind.

Come out of the cage of your little, egoistical, selfish personality. Renounce and sacrifice this selfish personality at the altar of humanity. Where there is no “I”, where there is no mind, where there is no selfishness, there is ideal *karma yoga*. It becomes *upasana* (worship).

You can be established in a state where even though acting, you are no more acting. *Karma* or work cannot bind you because you are acting without sense of doership. The feeling “I am doing” is not there; rather, “He is getting it done through me.” You are a witness of your own activity, a witness of your own actions, and the poison of *kartritva* or sense of doer-ship is removed from the activity; it becomes sublime activity. Then it is God’s will that manifests itself through you.

To be established in this state of inner absence of self, one has to diligently pursue a method of *sadhana* and persist in it, diligently continue to negate the ego, negate the self. It does not come in a day, but it comes if you are persistent.

In his “Song of Eighteen Ities,” Gurudev has used two expressions that seem more or less similar in their meaning. He used the expression “fixity”: being firm, firmly fixed in your vow, in your *pratijna* (resolve), in your determination. Be firmly fixed, let nothing shake you. Become so established in your *niyama* (observance) that nothing can move you. Fixity indicates a certain attitude, a state that you have achieved or

attained in your interior. You have become strong within, unshakable within, firm within.

While fixity involves a certain inner state you have reached after much diligence and struggle, the second expression, “tenacity,” indicates an attitude, a certain inner attitude with which you live your life, engage in your *sadhana*. And that attitude is a firm resolution not to give up no matter what obstacles come, no matter what setbacks, no matter what disappointments or discouragements.

“I will not leave my pursuit until and unless I get complete success in it. I shall not give up this *sadhana*, I shall continue with this *abhyasa* (practice), I will not give up”—this attitude is called tenacity. Having taken up something wise, something good, never to abandon it, never to leave it, to be determined to come out victorious—this attitude is called tenacity.

Tenacity is different from obstinacy. Obstinacy is a negative, *tamasic* quality. You should not have tenacity with regard to some wrong things that you might have taken up in a state of folly. Tenacity is a positive quality, *sattvic*: never to swerve from your purpose, from your determination. In this way, there should be in the heart of the *sadhak* the determined adherence to one’s ideals, and one must be established in an inner state which is unassailable, not affected by anything.

A person of a very negative nature does not commence any serious undertaking due to hesitancy. “Oh, if I undertake this, who knows, afterwards this difficulty may come, that obstacle may come.” So thinking, even though he intends to have a good life and do good things, because of this nervousness and fear of obstacles, he never does them. This is not good. There are others who no doubt start doing something good, but when obstacles and troubles come in their way, they give it up. But the real spiritual seeker, the real *sadhak*, once having taken up something, no matter how many obstacles or difficulties come, how many adverse

circumstances face him, he always thinks, “No, I’ll never leave it! I have taken this up, I will see it through, I shall not be deterred by anything.” This is the *uttama adhikari* (best qualified aspirant).

That is the thing needful in your spiritual life. Fixity of principles, and tenacity—never to let go. It leads to success. Lord Krishna says in His Gita *jnana upades* (wisdom teaching): “Never leave your *abhyasa*, never give up your *abhyasa*. Because that is the secret of success and attainment. You may fail, that does not matter. If you are persistent in your *abhyasa* you will attain Me.” A seemingly impossible thing becomes possible in the face of sheer persistent *abhyasa*, regular, unflinching, unbroken *abhyasa*. It breaks down all barriers; it breaks down all obstacles on the way; it overcomes all hurdles and reaches the goal. This is the type of nature that the *sadhak* should seek to develop within himself. In that lies the guarantee of his success.

May the grace of the Supreme Lord be upon you, be upon your spiritual life, be upon your spiritual striving, so that casting aside any doubt, any misgivings like, “whether I shall attain or not, whether I shall succeed or not, whether I have chosen the right thing or not,” and not allowing any such misgivings or doubts to come into the mind, with determination and tenacity, be firmly established in *sadhana*. Let your *sadhana*, your *abhyasa* be *akhand* (unbroken). And with firm faith and determination, may you through such unbroken *sadhana* enter into that supreme state which is beyond sorrow and suffering, which is peace and joy! For that is your birthright. For that attainment alone you have been born as a human being and with good *samskaras* (mental impressions) and good *vasanas* (subtle desires). May you not be indifferent to your own highest welfare. May you be serious in your *sadhana*. May God shower grace upon you!

THE SPIRIT HAS TO BE KEPT UP

The one very close intimate truth about spiritual life, that is important to each individual, is that the spirit has to be kept up. Then alone any progress is possible, any gain is to be expected. And it is we who have to make effort to keep up the spirit. We cannot expect it to come by itself.

Guru Maharaj Swami Sivanandaji was very particular in telling us again and again: “Desire and deserve.” He used to say: “To desire is very good. To aspire to gain many things, to progress in many things, to achieve and attain many things, is good.” But then, we should also, with equal earnestness and sincerity, diligently strive to deserve what we desire. We must calmly and coolly apply ourselves in a practical manner to *deserve* that which we desire.

Desiring for something noble, something sublime, something good, is not undesirable. It is not in any way wrong. It is perfectly in the fitness of things. *Jijnasa* (desire to know) is good. *Subhecha* (good desire) is good. So much so, that the desire to do good, the desire to help others, the desire to acquire spirituality, the desire to keep becoming a better person day by day, is declared to be divine. It is a divine factor. “It is verily My own presence. It is I who appear as such desire in a good person, in an aspiring person, in a person who wishes to become better. In such a person it is I who manifest as such desire.”

Subhecha is the key to elevating, uplifting, ourselves. In the *sapta-jnana-bhumika* (seven stages of knowledge), *subhecha* is the first *bhumika* (stage). Before you start your journey towards ultimate illumination or enlightenment, the first step is to conceive a good desire in your heart. But if it is to be a real dynamic factor, bringing about progress day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, it should be constantly re-

newed. It should be constantly revitalised and reinvigorated.

For everything becomes possible where there is sustained enthusiasm. The one who achieves and attains is the one who is able to keep up a sustained, continuous enthusiasm despite little setbacks, despite the inevitable ups and downs, despite occasional lack of self-confidence, occasional depression and dejection, occasional faltering and hesitation. He says: "No, this is not me. This is something else that is interfering with me. I am keen aspiration. I am determined desire. I am enthusiasm. Therefore, I shall assert myself." As Lord Krishna puts it: "*uddharet atmanatmanam*—by your own Self is the self to be uplifted, elevated, raised higher." And we should not do anything foolish or thoughtless that is likely to bring about the opposite. A keen eagerness to improve must be there. And this spirit should be renewed every day, day by day.

And this requires trust in God. It requires faith in the scriptures: "You are meant for great things. *He amrtasya putrah* (O children of Immortality), you are meant for liberation, you are meant for *jivan-mukti*. You are divine." You must have faith in these great truths proclaimed and declared for our benefit long ago.

And you must have trust: "If He has made me in His image, if He has breathed His spirit into me, if I am an *amsa* (part) and He has sent me here to realise my Self, to know my Divinity, then it must be possible. If that is God's plan for me, why should I think otherwise, why should I act otherwise? No, I shall not. I shall not be unwise." Such an eagerness, such a keen desire, such an enthusiasm, is a result of true faith, a result of trust: "It is possible because He has meant me to be this." That trust should be there, that faith—*sraddhavan labhate jnanam* (The man who is full of faith obtains knowledge). What one's faith is, that one is.

Ponder well this intimate truth regarding your own personal life. The spirit has to be renewed. A sustained, continuous spirit has to be kept up in all directions. And it should be *constantly* revitalised. This is the key to achievement, the key to attainment, the key to *saphalata* (success). May God bless you all to very clearly recognise the importance of this truth and its importance in your own life if your life is to move ahead! May God give you the wisdom to act upon this truth, and may your efforts be crowned with success!

UNTIL THE VERY LAST BREATH

To enter into the spiritual life is a rare blessedness; it is a great good. To take it seriously and engage in active spiritual *sadhana* is a second blessedness and a still greater good. But, to persevere in the spiritual life, to be ever progressive and ceaseless in one's spiritual life, is the greatest good, the crowning blessedness.

One makes up one's mind: "Come what may, until the very last breath persists in this body, I shall not swerve from the path of *sadhana*. Until the very last breath is in the body I shall persevere, I shall dedicate myself to the divine life. I shall be a *yogi*; I shall ever be intent upon attaining the Goal. I shall never slacken my efforts, much less cease my endeavour.

"Till the very last breath I shall be a *jijnasu*, a *sadhaka*. Come what may I shall be a *yogi* till the very last. Anything else may be uncertain, but this is certain. All else may be undecided, but this is decided once and for all. I am determined that the spiritual life will be my life, the spiritual goal will be my goal. And God will be the central fact in my life. I shall live my life for God and His attainment."

Thus, if one gladly takes upon oneself, after serious deliberation and firm conviction, this "do or die" approach and attitude to life, that would indeed be the crowning glory of one's *sadhana* life. This is the greatest good; it is the supreme blessedness. And it is to such a *sadhaka* that success comes, success is sure, fulfilment awaits.

Here there is no doubt or vagueness. The Cosmic Being gives Itself to one who has totally given oneself to the Cosmic Being, to one who is prepared to live or die for That. This is for sure. One who has left everything and asks only for That, That gives Itself fully and totally to such a one. This

is the truth.

Therefore, rejoice greatly that this choice is before you. Rejoice greatly that this opportunity beckons you. Rejoice greatly that the dispensation of the Divine is that to each seeking soul belongs that for which its life is offered and lived until the last. "Those that give themselves unto Me, to them I give Myself." This is the declaration.

Therefore, this is the life, this is the time, this is the great opportunity. Let each day be lived with the awareness of this great good fortune, with the awareness of this supreme blessedness, of this golden opportunity. Then we shall have nothing to regret. Rather, we shall have all reason to rejoice.

There is a concept in the West which is applicable to the field of heroics: "Success and victory is to those who dare." Again: "A coward dies a thousand times, a brave man but once." And that one death comes in triumph, in success and in victory. It is the crowning glory, and it is assured for those who dare. More than in any other field of human endeavour, such daring and dedication, such defying of death itself is called for in the life spiritual.

May the grace of God and Gurudev make you of that stuff. Coming into contact with the philosopher's stone, iron no longer remains as iron; it becomes pure gold. Not without meaning has the Cosmic Being brought you into living contact with the sublime, life-transforming, spiritual wisdom teachings of blessed and beloved Holy Master Gurudev Swami Sivanandaji. Having thus come into contact, be heroes in this strife. Dare to live the spiritual life unto the last and crown yourself with the supreme blessedness of success, victory and a life triumphant!

SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

We have to progress day by day towards the highest ideal and therefore, it is a very blessed day and a very auspicious occasion, when we start regular Sadhana upon the theory and practice of meditation in all its aspects and spiritualise all our activities. We do meditation in the morning and evening, but during our activities and dealings with others in the day, we show petty-mindedness and selfishness. This obstructs our Sadhana and nullifies the benefit of our meditation. Penelope, the wife of Ulyses, had during her husband's absence many suitors, but she did not want to become the wife of any one of them. She was a faithful and loyal lady. She therefore told her suitors that she was preparing a robe and until it was finished, she would not accept anyone. They agreed. Every day she went on knitting and at night she used to undo all the work she had done during the day. This continued till Ulyses appeared. A similar thing should not happen in our life. Whatever we might have practised in the morning and evening, to that we should not add an undivine element. If during our actions we forget our essence, if we are harsh, if we criticise, if we are dishonest-all these things will undo whatever Sadhana we have done in the hours of meditation. Therefore, our external physical life and activity, our speech and actions have closely to keep up and further the spirit of our meditation, worship and Sadhana. In order to do this, it is very essential that we not only confine our Sadhana to a few quiet hours, but we should also divinise all our actions during the day. All our actions should express our real, inner nature. They should all become spiritualised. It is this divinisation of all activities that is taught in Karma Yoga. Everyone must know this, whether he is a Dhyana Yogi, Bhakti Yogi or a Vedantin. Karma Yoga is very difficult. You can have

a very ideal Bhava when you are alone; but when you come into clash with hard realities in the world of diversities, to keep up harmony, to express only divinity, selflessness, is a hard job. But it is worth the while, because it will make other Yogas fruitful. The man who lives an ideal life, full of self-sacrifice, full of sweetness-one Mala of Japa that he does is equal to ten thousand Malas done by other people, because his nature is purified by divine activity. But if your nature is full of Kama and Krodha, even if you do meditation, as the field is not prepared, it will not be fruitful. One wonders: "Why am I not progressing?" Because you are contradicting your Sadhana in your active life. An aspirant must be wise. He should know where the pot is leaking. Otherwise when the pot is leaking, you will be trying to fill it. It is useless. First you must know where the pot is leaking. For this, you have to know the art of Karma Yoga.

SADHANA

(Swami Sivananda)

Sadhana is spiritual movement consciously systematised. Sadhana is the purpose for which we have come to this place.

Abhyasa and Sadhana are synonymous terms. The object of Sadhana is to release life from the limitations with which it is bound.

Sadhana is a lifelong process. Every day, every hour, every minute, is an onward march. Obstacles are innumerable in this great voyage. But, so long as you hold God as thy guide, there is nothing to worry about. You are sure to reach the other shore.

Some people have curiosity for the spiritual line. They have no real thirst for liberation. They think that they will get certain powers or Siddhis if they do some Yogic practices. When they do not attain the powers, they lose patience and give up the practices, abandon the spiritual path, and pooh-pooh the Yogins and Yoga.

Mere curiosity will not help you to attain any spiritual progress. Curiosity-mongering is more abominable than mischief-mongering. Introspect. Analyse your thoughts and find out whether you have real spiritual hunger or mere curiosity-mongering. Transmute curiosity-mongering into real thirsting for salvation by constant Satsanga, study of good religious books, prayer, Japa and meditation.

You must have interest and liking in your Sadhana. You must understand well the technique and benefits of Sadhana. You must have the ability and capacity to do Sadhana. Then alone you will have joy in doing the Sadhana and full success in it.

Aspiration and Achievement

Good intentions alone will not do. They must be backed up by good actions. You may enter the spiritual path with the best intention of attaining Atma-Jnana, but unless you are vigilant and diligent, unless you do intense and rigorous Sadhana, unless you guard yourself against lust, anger and greed, egoism and selfishness, the good intentions alone will not enable you to achieve success.

Moral purity and spiritual aspiration are the first steps in the seeker's path. Without a strong conviction in moral values, there can surely be no spiritual life, or even a good life.

Stern self-discipline is absolutely essential. Self-discipline does not mean suppression, but taming the brute within. It means humanisation of the animal and spiritualisation of the human.

You will have to break the virgin soil before you sow the seed. The seed breaks itself before it sprouts out as a plant. Destruction precedes construction. This is the immutable law of nature. You will have to destroy your brutal nature first before you develop divine nature.

During the period of Sadhana, do not mix much; do not talk much; do not walk much; do not eat much; do not sleep much. Observe carefully the five 'do-not's. Mixing will cause disturbances in the mind. Talking much will cause distraction of the mind. Walking much causes exhaustion and weakness. Eating much induces laziness and sleepiness.

The Spiritual Path

The spiritual path may, in the beginning, appear to be very hard, thorny, precipitous and slippery. Renunciation of objects gives pain at the outset. If you struggle hard to tread the path, if you once make a strong determination and firm resolve, then it becomes very easy. You get interest and new joy. Your heart expands. You have a broad outlook of life.

You have a new, wider vision. You feel the help from the invisible hands of the indweller of your heart. Your doubts are cleared by themselves by getting answers from within. You can hear the shrill, sweet voice of God. There is an indescribable thrill of divine ecstasy from within. There is deep, abiding, everlasting joy and unruffled peace. There is ineffable, unabating, undiminishing, un-decaying spiritual bliss. This gives new strength. The footing in the path becomes firmer and firmer. The Jivanmuktas, Yogins, Nitya-siddhas, Amara-purushas, and Chiranjivis lend their helping hands to the struggling aspirants. The aspirants feel this actually. The feeling of loneliness and of being neglected and forsaken vanishes entirely.

You are backed up at all times by a mighty power that works everywhere in the cosmos. Therefore you have nothing to fear. Take care of the details in Sadhana. The major factor will take care of itself.

Some aspirants leave Sadhana after some time. They expect great fruits quickly. They expect many Siddhis within a short time. When they do not get some, they give up the Sadhana. There are several ranges of consciousness between the ordinary human consciousness and the supere-consciousness of Brahman. Different veils have to be torn down on the way; many lower centres have to be opened up; many hurdles have to be crossed over before the final goal is reached.

Spiritual Progress Is Like a Spiral

You have to plod on and scale many hills. You cannot climb the Everest in one jump. There is no jumping on the spiritual path.

Self-realisation is not like a six-year postgraduate course. It is the result of intense protracted Sadhana.

There is no shortcut in the spiritual path. There is no royal

road to the kingdom of immortal bliss. There is no half-measure in the divine path. Strict, hard discipline is wanted. Then alone can you conquer Maya. Only then can you control the mind.

Saints and Yogins will never think that they have controlled the mind and get a terrible downfall. It is the very nature of life, mind, and Prakriti to be constantly in motion. When there is the idea in the mind that the highest goal is yet to be achieved, you will always move towards it. If you imagine that you have got to the top, you will anyhow have to move, and that movement will be downward. You will have a downfall. Aspire for higher and higher realisation till the breath ceases in the nostril.

Spiritual progress is slow, as the spiritual Sadhana is difficult and laborious. It is like the spiral. In the beginning, great striving is needed. Gradually, the circle becomes smaller and smaller. So also, the striving becomes less and less. The aspirant gains spiritual strength slowly. He marches faster and faster. Finally, he does not go by furlong after furlong. He proceeds by mile after mile. He gallops and gallops. Therefore, be patient; be persevering; be steady.

Sings of Spiritual Progress

The gradual inward progress is mostly silent and unseen, like the quiet unfolding of a bud into a flower in the hours of the night. Therefore, do not be dejected. Do not depress yourself with the idea that you are not progressing.

Real spiritual progress is really and accurately measured by the peacefulness, serenity, and calmness that you manifest in the waking state. You will have a healthy body and mind, the excretions will be scanty, the voice will be sweet, the face will be brilliant, the eyes will be lustrous. You will be ever calm, tranquil, and poised; you will be ever cheerful, fearless, and contented. You will be dispassionate and discriminative. There

will be no attraction for the world. Things that used to upset you before will not upset you now. You will have an unruffled mind. You will have introversion. Things that used to give you pleasure produce disgust or a reverse effect now. You will be longing to have more meditation. You will experience lights, visions, divine smell, divine taste. The idea that all forms are forms of the Lord will get stronger and stronger in you. You will feel everywhere the presence of God. You will experience the nearness of God. You will have a very steady Asana. You will develop a burning desire for selfless service.

Watch whether you are stationary in the spiritual path, or retrogressing, or advancing. If your Japa, meditation or Vedantic Vichara thickens your veil and fattens your egoism, it is not then a spiritual Sadhana. Remember this point well. It is only a kind of occult practice. Watch, introspect. Practise self-analysis and kill ruthlessly this formidable egoism. This is important Sadhana. Egoism will lurk like a thief and assume various forms like a chameleon or a Bahurupi or a dramatic actor.

Do not stop Sadhana when you get a few glimpses of realisation. Continue practice till you are fully established in Bhuma, the unconditioned Brahman. This is important. If you stop practice and move about in the world, there is every likelihood of a downfall. The reaction will be tremendous. Examples are not lacking. Numerous persons have been so ruined. A glimpse cannot give you perfect safety. Do not be carried away by name and fame. You can renounce your wife, children, parents, house, friends, and relatives. It is very, very difficult to renounce the intellectual pleasure, the pleasure from name and fame. I seriously warn you. A man who can draw happiness from the Atman within, will never care a jot for this trivial, paltry affair. The world is a mighty big thing for a worldly man. It is a straw for a Knower of Brahman. It is

mustard, a pin's point, a dot, a bubble, an airy nothing for a Brahma-jnani. Be circumspective. Ignore all these trivial things. Be steady with your practice. Never stop the practice till the final beatitude is reached. Never cease Sadhana till you can constantly dwell in full brahmic consciousness.

Do not let failures discourage you, but go on doing your best. Do not brood over your past mistakes and failures, as this will only fill your mind with grief, regret, and depression. Do not repeat them in future. Be cautious. Just think of the causes which led to your failures and try to remove them in future. Strengthen yourself with new vigour and virtues. Develop slowly your will-power.

Every temptation that is resisted, every evil thought that is curbed, every desire that is subdued, every bitter word that is withheld, every noble aspiration that is encouraged, every sublime thought that is cultivated, adds to the development of will-force, good character, and attainment of eternal bliss and immortality.

Every bit of Sadhana done is surely recorded without fail in your hidden consciousness. No Sadhana ever goes in vain. Every bit of it is credited immediately towards your evolution. This is the law. Think not negative thoughts, but calmly go on with the Sadhana. Be regularly at it. Without missing a single day, proceed onward with your spiritual practices. Little by little, the power accumulates and it will grow. Ultimately, the cumulative force of all the continuous earnest Sadhana done perseveringly and patiently over a long period of life has its inevitable grand consummation at the supreme moment when it bears fruit in the form of blissful Realisation.

Let the Sadhana be regular, continuous, unbroken, and earnest. Not only regularity, but also continuity in Sadhana and meditation is necessary if you want to attain Self-realisation quickly. A spiritual stream once set going does not

dry up, unless the channel-bed is blocked, unless there is stagnation. Be vigilant eternally. Meditate regularly. Annihilate the undercurrent of Vasanas.

Obstacles to Spiritual Progress

Sometimes the aspirant gets stuck up. He cannot proceed further in his path. Sometimes he is sidetracked through Siddhis. He loses his way and walks in some other direction. He misses the goal. Sometimes he is assailed by temptations and various oppositions. Sometimes he gets false contentment. He thinks he has reached his goal and stops all Sadhana. Sometimes he is careless, lazy, indolent. He cannot do any Sadhana. Therefore, be eternally vigilant, like the captain of a ship, like the surgeon in the operation theatre.

The spiritual path is full of hurdles. If you conquer one obstacle, another obstacle is ready to manifest. If you control the sense of taste, another Indriya is simply waiting to assault you with redoubled force and vigour. If you remove greed, anger is waiting to hurl you down. If you drive egoism through one door, it enters through another door. Great patience, perseverance, vigilance, and undaunted strength are needed.

Be firm, steady, and steadfast. People will mock at you; be silent. People will insult you; be silent. People will spread evil rumours about you; be silent. Stick to the spiritual path. Do not swerve. Seek the truth wherever it may lead you to, and whatever be the cost and sacrifice.

Start Sadhana Now

Act now. Live now. Know now. Realize now. Be happy now.

Every death is a reminder. Every bell that rings says, "The end is near." Every day robs off from you one part of your precious life. Therefore, you should be very earnest in plunging yourself in constant Sadhana.

Never fall a victim to fruitless regret. Today is the best day. Today is the day of your new birth. Start Sadhana now.

With folded palms, bid goodbye to past mistakes and faults. You have learnt your lessons. March forward now with new hope, determination, and vigilance.

Waver not. Fear not. Doubt not. Do something substantial in the path of Sadhana instead of wasting your time in idle pursuits and lethargy. You have infinite strength within you. There is a vast reservoir of power within you. Therefore, do not lose heart. Obstacles are steppingstones to success. They will develop your will. Do not allow yourself to be crushed by them. Defects remind you of perfection. Sin reminds you of virtue. Choose the positive path.

If you think, "I will take a bath when all the waves of the sea subside," this is not possible. The waves will never subside and you will never take a bath. Even so, if you think, "I will start spiritual Sadhana or meditation when all my cares, worries and anxieties cease, when all my sons are fixed up in life, when I have ample leisure after retirement," this is not possible. You will not be able to sit even for half an hour when you become old. You will have no strength to do any rigorous Tapas when you are in advanced senility. You must start vigorous spiritual practices when you are young, whatever your conditions, circumstances and environments may be. Then only you will reap a rich spiritual harvest when you become old. You will enjoy the everlasting peace of the Eternal.

DO THE NEEDFUL

God's grace and Guru's blessings will be of some use if they are followed by your own sincere and earnest self-effort. Why do we not do the needful? Because we are engaged in a dozen miscellaneous things, everything except the thing we came here to do. That is why God - realisation goes begging.

We have to do the needful. God's grace is there, I assure you. In the lives of each and everyone of you God's grace is abundantly there. I assert it boldly. With all my conviction, I affirm this truth: You are blessed. You have the divine grace of God in abundance in your life. And you have the hand of Gurudev's benedictions, his gaze of compassion upon you. There is no doubt about it. Now it is your turn to recognise the presence of grace and blessings and do the needful.

- Swami Chidananda

Apply yourself diligently to Yogic Sadhana

"Life is short, time is fleeting, obstacles are many,
Cut the knot of Avidya and drink the Nirvanic bliss;
Life is short, time is fleeting,

the world is full of miseries,
Apply yourself diligently to Yogic Sadhana;

The world is a Mela for two days,
This life is a bubble for two seconds;

You came alone, you will go alone,
no one will follow thee;

You came naked, you will go naked,
no one will follow thee;

Do Bhajan, do Kirtan, for, this alone will follow thee."

"What have you learnt, tell me frankly, from the
Bihar and Quetta earthquakes?

Have you got now real Vairagya?

Do you practise Japa and Kirtan?
Can you expect real Santi if you waste your time
in cards and cinemas?

When your throat is choked at the time of death,
who will help you for your salvation?"

- Swami Sivananda

CHAPTER - 12 UNITY OF RELIGIONS

ESSENCE OF RELIGION

It is very necessary to first understand the meaning and purpose of life. Then alone can man live meaningfully, understanding the significance of his existence and presence here on earth and thus be able to proceed in the right direction and attain success and fulfilment in life. The main object and purpose of all religions that exists in this human world is to grant to mankind this right understanding of one's life. Religion exists to bring to us the right knowledge and understanding of why we are here, what is the meaning and significance of our presence upon earth and what is the goal that we have to attain in and through this life. In their innermost essential teachings all religions are identical.

There are differences in the outer form and the mode of the practice of religions. This is inevitable because these religions have developed in different parts of the globe, in different periods of human history and, therefore, due to historical factors and geographical conditions the outer ceremonial and ritualistic aspects of religion are naturally different from one another. Because of these differences in geographical occasion and the historic time period these religions first emerged through the teachings of some great prophets. But when one tries to go beyond the outer formalism of religion the mere external, ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of religion, one finds that the inner essence of all religions bring them close to each other and there is a similarity which is not apparent on the surface. The essence of all religions is almost identical because all the great prophets were messengers of God and their message was the declaring of the Will of God for man on earth. God's divine plan for man

on earth and this Will of God for man's life and conduct and man's mission on earth is and always has been, love, harmony, brotherhood, service and truthfulness-Prema, Santi, Samarasya, Seva, Satya. These have been the most important teachings of all religions because it is God's Will that man becomes a creature of love even as He Himself is, that man becomes a creature of verity, integrity, truthfulness, purity, and that man becomes a creature of kindness and compassion. This is what we expect from God for ourselves-forgiveness of our sins, kindness and compassion, tolerance of our little weaknesses and our shortcomings and our human foibles.

In our own life we must practise these fundamental divine virtues as part of the practice of religion. Religion is not merely ritual and ceremony. Religion goes beyond it. Religion is the movement of the deepest depth of our being where we are not merely physical and earth creatures, but sparks of divinity, we are waves upon the ocean of eternal divine existence. It is in this innermost depth of our being wherein we are spiritual in nature. In this depth, we make a determined attempt, a continuous effort to link ourselves once again with the divine source of our being. This is the very essence of religion. Religions exist and function in order to bring man back into a state of living relationship with God. The essence of religion is reestablishing our forgotten connection with the Supreme Universal Soul.

Religions exist to bring the human back into close contact with the Divine, to bring the individual once again into a living union with the Universal Soul. Such reestablishment of this gross connection, of forgotten relationship, this inner spiritual union with the Universal Soul is possible only if we earnestly strive to purify our entire nature and rid it of all that is gross, all that is undivine and unspiritual. If we have to draw

near to God, we have to establish a living relationship with Him, enter into a spiritual communion with Him and thus attain God experience and abide in God. For that we have to grow in His likeness. We have to develop within us those very sublime qualities which are indicative of God-nature. For that man must eradicate from his personality and character all low and petty tendencies like craving, carnal passion, impurity, greed, selfishness, anger, jealousy, envy, haughtiness.

If you ponder the great teachings given by Lord Krishna in the 16th Chapter of the Srimad Bhagavad Gita you will understand this process of cleansing ourselves of the dross of undivine and unspiritual qualities and trends in our nature and thus purifying our life and raising the standard of its living to a higher sublime level. It is precisely here that religion comes as a great help. Religions exist to ennoble human nature, to refine human thought, word and actions, and to make, sublime human character and conduct. So, the more you grow into purity, the more you grow into goodness, the more you grow into sanctity and holiness and you begin to approach the supreme experience of union with God, the supreme experience of entering into a state of conscious and living relationship with God. This is the heart of the religion of man, bringing man back into a con-scious living relationship with God and thus 'divinising' his nature and making him a great boon to human society itself. Such people illumine with God-experience, become centres of love, harmony, goodwill, centres of all that is holy auspicious and blessed, centres of purity and goodness. They become the salt of life; they become the precious gems in the human treasure, as it were. They become the real wealth of mankind. To enable human beings to thus grow into this divine nature and to make them the centres of divinity, religions show the way.

The heart of religion is to make us realise our kinship with the

Universal Being, the Divine Universal Soul, God. All the rituals and ceremonials have a place at a certain period of your practice of religion but later on they must give way to this inner transformation of human nature from grossness to sublimity and subtlety, from passion to purity, from selfishness to selflessness and to a dedicated life of love and service. This is the essence of religion. This is the essence of the teachings of all the great prophets. O man, thou art divine, thou art the child of God. Thou art divine in nature, therefore divinely live your life. May your thoughts and feelings be divine. May your attitudes and approach be divine. May your reactions to outer occurrences be divine and may your relationship with the rest of human kind also be divine because to live divinely is the most natural thing for you because you are a divine, being a child of God. This is the central call, this is the very essence of all the existing world religions.

Here is what the beloved and holy Master, Swami Sivananda, has to say about the essentials of all religions: "There is a God or a Supreme Being. In Him alone you will find supreme peace, Parama Santi, eternal bliss, freedom, perfection and immortality. Never hurt the feelings of others. Speak the truth. Do not kill any sentient beings. Cultivate divine virtues such as humility, courage, forgiveness, tolerance and compassion. Love all, be kind to all. Be good, do good. Be charitable. Purify the heart. Serve humanity. Share what you have with others. Love thy neighbour as thy own self. Cultivate universal brotherhood. Destroy all barriers that separate man from man. These, indeed, constitute the essentials of all religions. In this all religions are one. There is no clash or conflict or disharmony between religions in the innermost depth of their true nature, in their innermost essential original teachings."

Religion, therefore, if rightly understood and properly

practised, will ennoble human nature, will get rid human nature of all that is negative, all that stands between the self and one's fellow beings, all that stands between man and God. The removal of these obstacles, the experiencing of brotherhood, coming out from your little narrow shell of selfish living and embracing the whole humanity as your own family will be brought about if religion is properly understood and practised. Therefore, do not unnecessarily fight and quarrel regarding the external ritualistic and ceremonial aspects of religion. They have an important place, but are bound to differ because individuals differ in the external expression of their lives. Go to the heart of the teachings of each prophet. No prophet, no messenger, no scripture even calls man an earth creature. No scripture, no prophet ever says, 'utter lies and be harsh, be angry, hate your neighbour'. On the contrary, all the religions and scriptures proclaim the sublimity and the necessity of love, compassion, tolerance, forgiveness, purity of character and conduct, unity, harmony and brotherhood. These are the very inner-most teachings, the very core and essence of all religions.

Beloved friends, let us open our eyes now and come out of our narrow begotten stand regarding religions. Let us be open-minded and tolerant. Let us destroy this artificially created barrier between different religions and sects, different Sampradayas (schools of thought). The external hairsplitting arguments of Vedantins, leave it to the Pandits, the scholars and the philosophers. Be a man of true religion. Bring God into your life. Know that He is your constant companion and try to live as a true child of God. This is the very essence of all the scriptures. It is the essence of the teachings of all the great saints and sages, prophets and messengers of God. This is the essence of all religions. It teaches purity, truthfulness, goodness, harmony, live, unselfishness, the spirit

of service, forgiveness. Therefore, beloved children of the Divine, do not be misled and misguided by people who for their own selfish interest speak from platforms of different religions and try to separate man from man. Religion exists in the world not to bring about discord, differences and war. On the contrary, religion exists in order to harmonise, to bring together, to unite and to make man conscious of the brotherhood of man. It shows to us the sanctity of all life and declares to us that non-injury, compassion or kindness is the highest of all laws - Ahimsa paramo dharmah.

The Saint Ramalinga, Jyoti Ramalinga Swami declared before his disappearance that "compassion to all creatures is the key to heaven and the key to blessedness." The great Saint Francis of Assisi prayed in a simple prayer, "O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace. Where there is hatred, let me bring love; where there is anger, let me bring pardon; where there is despair, let me bring hope; where there is doubt, let me bring faith; where there is darkness, let me bring light; where there is sadness, let me bring joy. O Divine Master, I do not seek so much to be understood by others, but rather to understand others. I do not seek so much to be loved by others, but rather to love others. I do not seek so much to be consoled, but rather to console others. For it is in giving that one receives, for it is in par-doning of others that one is pardoned, for it is in dying to this little self, this little petty egoistic 'I', that one attains to everlasting life."

Beloved brothers, is this not really the heart and essence of all religions? For great-hearted people the whole world is their family. The essential teachings, the heart and core of religion, is love, goodness, purity, truthfulness, kindness, compassion, ceaseless remembrance of God and intense love and the desire to attain Him, the intense urge to serve mankind because you see brotherhood amongst all

mankind and try to live life in order to benefit all life around you. Thus, Paropakara and Isvara-sakshatkara, doing good unto others and trying to attain God-experience constitute the heart and essence of all the religions of the world. And this is the truth. This should be understood and if all take to the practice of this real religion, there is no doubt that all fights and quarrels will disappear. All clash and conflict in the name of religion will become a thing of the past and religion will become a great unifying force in human society to bring about harmony, friendship and brotherhood amongst all mankind.

This is my firm conviction and therefore, I urge upon you all not to be misled and misguided by people with vested interests into believing that religions differ. On the contrary, try to contemplate on this innermost aspect of the essence of religion and live a life of love, brotherhood, unity, harmony and selfless service unto all beings. This is my message today when I share these few thoughts upon the essence of all religions. Religion is not the outer structure of organised religions. The church is not Christianity, the mosque is not Islam, the Mandir is not the real Vedic religion. They are only the outer social structures to keep together the followers of the different faiths by bringing them together from time to time for collective worship and also for observing periodically certain common festivities, certain common days of fasting, praying and feasting etc. These are methods created to keep closely together the community of people who follow different faiths. This aspect, the outer structure of religions, may be necessary, but it does not constitute its real lesson. Those who fail to understand it, those who don't grasp this inner truth, take the outer structure to be the real religion and fail to give religion its innermost spiritual essence. This is a grave error, a grave blunder.

Swami Vivekananda once said, "It is good to be born into a church, but it is bad to die in the church", which meant that while we are born into a religion, we have no choice about it. As we grow up and expand in wisdom we should become tolerant and our love and sympathy and understanding should go beyond the borders of our own religion and a certain universality of vision should be adopted, a universalism of our feelings towards others should come into our life and into our dealings with others and this universalism is all the more indispensable today when in many parts of the world religion is being made the main bone of contention, religion is being made the basis of intense hatred, clash and conflict, as it is in Belfast in Ireland, in the Middle East and even in our own country.

Religions, instead of becoming a force of peace and harmony, goodwill and love and brotherhood, have now become a force of conflicts, separation, mutual hatred and warfare. This is a great pity. It is deplorable indeed that such a sublime institution as religion which has its objective and purpose of the divinising of the human nature and the purifying of human conduct and spiritualising of all human life, instead of this, does the very contrary. This blunder is due to our having rejected the teachings of the scriptures, of our not properly understanding and following the teachings of the saints and sages. We merely give our adorations to the saints and sages, but we, very safely, ignore their teachings. This is the unfortunate attitude of man towards scriptures, towards saints. Saints have come into this earth to show us the sublime way of living life in an ideal manner. We should keep the shining example of these saints and sages before us as an Adarsa or as an ideal and try to live up to that great ideal.

I shall try to place before you the essence of religions which Beloved and Worshipful Holy Master Gurudev Swami

Sivanandaji put in the form of a prayer. Though it is in the form of prayer, this prayer is actually a blue print for ideal religious living and it is also a prayer that has within its contents the essence of all religions:

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love!
 Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
 Thou art Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.
 Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
 Thou art the Indweller of all beings.
 Grant us an understanding heart,
 Equal vision, balanced mind,
 Faith, devotion and wisdom.
 Grant us inner spiritual strength
 To resist temptations and to control the mind.
 Free us from egoism, lust, greed, hatred,
 anger and jealousy.
 Fill our hearts with divine virtues.
 Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms.
 Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.
 Let us ever remember Thee.
 Let us ever sing Thy glories.
 Let Thy Name be ever on our lips.
 Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

UNDERLYING UNITY OF RELIGIONS

Almighty Lord, Father of Mankind, Blessed Lord ! Grant us the grace of feeling Your presence at this moment in this Vigyan Bhavan Hall where you pervade as the invisible, the unmanifest Spirit Universal ever present within and without. Grant us also the grace of feeling our inner spiritual oneness in You, for though outwardly different in names and forms, in body and mind, yet in the Spirit we all find our oneness in You spiritually. May all Thy children therefore be filled with this feeling of spiritual oneness in You who are the One God. Let our hearts and minds be lifted to Thee, at this moment. Thou art the One God, when no universe existed, when no humanity had been created, when no religion or religions existed. Thou art the One, the non-dual, the infinite, the eternal Reality, Ekameva'dvitiyam Brahma.

Our obeisance to Thee who art One and non-dual but addressed in varying terms by Thy children. Thou art indeed the Brahman or the Bhagavan of the Vedic religion, Thou art the Ahura Mazda of the followers of Zoroaster. Thou art that ineffable state of Nirvana of the followers of the Great Sakhyia Muni Gautama Buddha. Thou art the Supreme Tao of the Taoist and the Satori of the Zen followers of the Taoist philosophies. Thou art the Siddha, the Aryanthana, the Aryana of the followers of the ancient Jain faith. Thou art Ek Omkar Satnaam of the followers of the Sikh brothers. Thou art Allah of those who follow Islam. Thou art Yahave or Jehovah of the brothers of the Judaic faith and Thou art verily the Almighty Father in Heaven who art addressed and prayed to in all the Christian world. Thou art the One Supreme Reality glorified and hymned in all the great scriptures of humanity. Thou art adored and worshipped alike in Buddhist Vihara, in Hindu Mandir, in Parsee Fire Temple, in Synagogue, Church, Mosque, Gurudwara -Thou art One. All worship Thee alone and it is this fact that makes the institution of human religion.

It is this one fact, the oneness of the Universal Reality, that makes the institution of human religion the most likely and effective basis of unity. Unity based upon any other factor cannot be really effective and lasting because the factors are themselves changeful and temporary. But this factor which we call Religion is the aspiration of the human individual soul to attain its Divine Origin, its Divine Source, in which it is ever rooted spiritually. Religion is the hunger of man for God', yearning of the finite for the Infinite, the attempt of the individual to once again find its wholeness in the Universal of which it is an inseparable part. This phenomenon is a universal phenomenon. It is as old as creation and it is the heart-throb of every human being in human society. This phenomenon of the human being's aspiration to know the greater Reality which is the source and origin not only of himself or herself but of the universe as well pervades the entire globe. Going to any nation, any section of humanity, the phenomenon of religion is to be found to be one of the all pervasive facts of human society. The emphasis on external non-essentials of religion which vary is due to the systems of faith, worship, prayer, etc., which have had their origin in different historical time and geographical set up. Geographical conditions vary, human environment varies and therefore suited to each environmental situation the external modes and forms of worshipping that One Universal Reality naturally takes diverse forms.

The Hindu insists upon a bath before going into his sanctum for worship. It would be impossible in a country like Arabia, where it is difficult to get even drinking water. Insisting upon bath is therefore not to be found in Islam because its origin was in a land which was a desert, where water was scarce. It was a precious commodity. I am just giving you one example how the external forms, which are the non-essentials of religion, vary but the heart of religion, the essence of this religion or that religion remains

the same. The religion of man, the human yearning to find his wholeness, his oneness with the universal source of its being, this essence of religion is the common, fundamental unifying factor to be found in all great faiths. So, go back into the origin of all the prophetic religions and seek to find the very heart and life-breath of religion in the living teachings of these great prophets. What did they preach? What did they ask their followers to do? They asked them to ever be united in the Spirit with the Universal Being, God, ceaselessly pray, have devotion for Allah, for Jehovah, for Almighty Father in Heaven. Humble yourself before Him. He is your Father, Mother, Friend, Relative. He is your all in all. He is your nearest and dearest, your only wealth and treasure; therefore do not forget Him. Do not neglect to cultivate a living relationship within, through faith and devotion, through love for Him, through constant remembrance of Him. So, live in God, be united with the Universal Soul, in the Spirit, whatever you are doing, wherever you are placed, no matter what shape or pattern your external life takes.

If we go to the actual teachings of the prophets, we find that they asked man never to forget God, ever be united with the Universal Soul for therein lies the promise of the betterment of the human individual. Therein lies the promise of evolution of man, getting better day by day, improving in his thoughts, words and action, for it is through this connection that we begin to get the inflow of the grace of God. The descent of all His divine qualities is love, compassion, purity, truth, wisdom, harmony and peace - branches of a tree spread in all directions. What is the secret of the life, the vitality and growth of this tree? What is its unbroken connection with some hidden source of nourishment invisible to you but nevertheless present under the surface of the earth? It is because it has driven its roots deep down into the ground on which it stands, that it is able to grow, to develop, to bring forth branches, leaves, flowers and fruits. Even so is man.

We, too, will develop and grow if we are rooted in the source of our being, that source of spiritual nourishment, that source of strength, peace and wisdom, God, call It by whatever name you like. By glorifying, by having love for Him, by praying to Him, by meditating daily on that One Reality, our life also will partake of that divine quality. Loving, being friendly, manifesting peace, expressing harmony in unity, will become spontaneous and natural to man if he is filled with the God- essence, and that is the Reality of man. There is the floor of Allah in each man. God created man in His image and breathed His Spirit into him. The breath of God is in man.

My beloved brothers of this human family, I urge you that this is the vision that we want. We must see man not as man different from us but as a child of God, as a moving temple of the Divine. He who sees the presence of that Spirit, the presence of God, he indeed seeth; we verily have to adopt this vision. He indeed sees the presence of the Divine in equal measure present in all beings, in all creatures, imperishable, within the perishable human body. You must leave narrowness and see all human beings, all creatures, as the moving temples of the living Spirit and therefore relate yourselves with love, in reverence, in harmony. We should have reverence for all life. If we see the presence of God, the presence of the Divine Spirit in all beings, it will become natural to us. It will not only contribute to religion, but also to this innermost central root concept of religion, that God dwells in man. Man's body is a moving, living temple of the living Spirit. It is this central concept of all religion, the heart of all religion that He is the lasting and effective basis, not only of national solidarity, but of human solidarity in this globe and that is the crying need of today in the light of the prevailing global situation.

It is a great privilege to assemble, to consider how we may join together and jointly initiate some action in order to stop

this impending calamity that threatens all humanity all over the globe. Therefore may this day, may this gathering, not be merely a meeting and a listening but may this be a point in time when each one of you who are occupying seats in this hall, may each one of you leave this hall with a firm resolution that from this day onwards my life will include each and every day some practical effort, some constructive and creative effort on my part to bring together all people of India - this land of Ganga, Yamuna, Sarasvati, Godavari, Narmada, Sindhu, Kaveri, this land of the Himalayas, the Vindhyas, this land of the equality of religions and this land which has given shelter to all religions, where tolerance is the hallmark of all religions - under one banner of a spiritual view of man and a spiritual view of life.

I am very much privileged that today I am able to share these thoughts with you under the auspices of the Venerable Saint and Holy Personality as Worshipful and Beloved Babaji Sri Sitaramdas Omkarnath. May his blessings be upon you. Even so the blessings of our Revered Father Mathais, Bishop Mathais, be upon each and every one of you. May the benedictions of all the saintly holy people who are seated here - Lama Lopsung, our Worshipful and Beloved Muni Sushilkumar Jain, our Beloved Hazarat Inayat Peer, Inayat Vilayat Khan, Gopal Singhji and Amin Nizami of the Orya Darga Nizamuddin - be upon you all. May their blessings give you health and long life, peace and prosperity, success in your undertakings. May their blessings arouse in your heart a burning desire to do something practical in your life to bring about national solidarity in this land of the Himalayas and go beyond that and work for human solidarity in order to establish peace on earth and goodwill amongst all mankind.

PEACE LIES IN UNITY AND NOT IN FRAGMENTATION

The great message of ancient seers and sages of transcendental experience, the great Upanishadic seers of intuitive wisdom, has always been a message of oneness and unity. Far back, from the dim past, from the time which is beyond the range of history, the very genesis of Bharatavarsha's great culture has been from the experience of absolute unity: 'Ekameva Advitiyam Brahma' has been the realisation out of which has sprung forth the Hindu civilisation. As time passed by, diverse changes came upon the different aspects of the nation's life, yet through all these the fundamental note of unity, which had been sounded right at the very dawn of pre-Vedic civilisation in this land, has never been lost sight of. This great message of oneness has always been kept vitally alive and it is this that is the real heart-throb of India. Many are the facets of that one great Reality and according as you approach it and view it, that aspect is revealed; but, yet, it is the self-same reality alone that forms the basis of true Existence. Thus, even though seers may call it differently, yet the Reality is one. This has been the message given to the world by Mother India. All her prophets, saints and sages down the centuries have ever striven only to stress this important message of oneness. As long as we cling to the awareness of this spiritual unity of man, so long we are safe and peace will prevail upon earth. But it is when this glorious factor of spiritual unity is forgotten and neglected and when man turns away from this truth and, due to ignorance and selfishness, seeks to separate himself from other men that all troubles, suffering, pain and sorrow arise and this seems exactly what man has done. No doubt, for the ordinary

observer there seems to exist great movements and organisations towards unification; but for one who looks beneath the surface, it is found that all these movements for unification have, at their very basis, the seeds of disunity and conflict. So long as these seeds of disunity and conflict are there in the very ideology of different groups, no amount of unification will tend towards ultimate peace. Those who accuse religion or spirituality of being the factor of conflict and hatred amongst mankind have failed miserably to understand even the simple point: what religion or spirituality is. If by religion they mean facing a particular direction when you say your prayers, or wearing a particular caste mark, or wearing one's clothes in a particular way, or worshipping God in a particular form or by a particular name, or reading scriptures in a particular language, then they have failed to understand the very spirit or the very meaning of religion. If this view of religion is held by them and, due to this initial blunder, they accuse religion as the cause for all conflict, then they may appear to be right.

But when we point out to them that true religion means charity, compassion, harmlessness, brotherhood, humility, selflessness and love, and that religion means manifestation in our everyday life the noble and divine qualities that are mentioned in the scriptures, then we will find that all those who shed blood in the name of religion were most irreligious types of men, men fallen from manliness into beastliness. They are far away from true religion and all their actions are direct contradictions to the basic religious spirit. Those who hated others, they were the very destroyers of religion. They were not people who lived the true religion but were those who killed the spirit of religion by their actions. People who destroyed life and property, people who hated others, people

who committed violence, people who coveted the wealth of others and who tried to take away forcibly what did not belong to them—however much they might have cried at the top of their voice that they were religious and claimed that they were followers of a faith, they were the most irreligious set of men upon the face of the earth. Thus, it is these irreligious people, who took the name of religion but based their lives upon irreligious and ignoble actions, who are the cause of dire misunderstanding that religion is at the back of violence, conflict, feuds and factions.

If you study the history of mankind, you will see that it is the spirit of selfishness, greed, lawlessness and irreligion that have been ever at the back of all conflict and violence; and it is the spirit of true religion (based on truth, love, sympathy, understanding and tolerance) as manifested and radiated by simple-minded saints, sages and men of wisdom of the different periods, that have been directly instrumental in soothing these wounds which were inflicted upon mankind by those irreligious set of people, who, under the cloak of religion, committed these irreligious acts. History also discloses that it is the spirit of true religion that made peace prevail once again where peace was shattered by violence in the name of religion, and it is the spirit of true religion that healed the wounds caused by the perpetrators of feuds in the name of religion and made love, compassion and brotherhood dwell in that place where hatred once dwelt. Where darkness was trying to overcome the consciousness of man, the spirit of true religion, of godliness and nobility radiated in and through the lives of men of wisdom. Thus, we have to understand that when once we know what religion really means, how the spirit of true religion is the manifestation of goodness and love, we will never commit the mistake of

holding religion responsible for the source of sorrow and pain.

If there is one single factor upon earth that can lead man towards happiness and peace, it is the spirit of true religion. Religion and spirituality alone can unify mankind and make men feel the fundamental oneness of Spirit, because religion concerns itself directly with the very nature of man; it does not concern itself with the idols and rituals wholly and solely. If this is the consideration of religion, it will be found that man is one throughout the whole world. Whatever he is at all times, in essence man is pure spirit, Sat-Chit-Ananda. Whatever the body he takes,—be he an Indian, China-man, European, Russian, American, Negro, etc.—underneath these superficial factors of names, forms and thoughts, man is an immortal spirit who is encased for a certain time in this physical sheath. Therefore, religion is concerned with man in his spiritual aspect, as he truly is, fundamentally and essentially; and it at once touches an awakening chord and gets an awakening response in the hearts of men all over the earth. Hence, truly understood, the spirit of religion tends for love, unity, brotherhood, goodness and purity in man's life and is directly concerned with the manifestation, in and through the life and actions of man, of all the divine virtues enumerated in the various scriptures. It is the manifestation of godly virtues (Daivi- Sampat) that will only ultimately bring about peace and goodwill amidst mankind and upon this earth. Therefore, it is on this proper understanding of the true spirit of religion that it was chosen as the proper medium to build the unity of all mankind.

Hence, it is the duty of one and all to disseminate and broadcast the meaning of true religion and the spirit of real religion. It is only when all people, literate and the ordinary, begin to get a knowledge of the true spirit of religion, which is

the same everywhere, for all men and at all times, and it is only to the extent to which men all over the world are made to understand the true spirit of religion, that they will be heading towards a day when peace will prevail upon the earth and goodwill amidst mankind. And as long as we fail to impress upon men the necessity to understand the true spirit behind the great religions, there can be no lasting peace and unity amidst mankind; for, all other attempts at unity will be based upon the external aspect, material aspect of the phenomenal world which is ever transitory and therefore not lasting in the benefits derived. The white races feel themselves one because they see unity in external aspect, for instance the colour of the skin; similarly, the yellow, brown and dark races see oneness amongst themselves through external appearances. Even so, if you take mental ideologies, there also you will find that you commit the same mistake of trying to base unity upon some passing aspect of personality, but not on the fundamental part of man. These passing aspects of men cannot cover the entire humanity. They only touch a part of man, and it is only when you try to base your attempts at unity upon the fundamental nature of man—his essential true nature, which is all-encompassing, all love—then you have struck upon a certain medium which is universal. And unity based upon this naturally becomes a universal unification, because you have found the universal common denominator in man. The universe is one whole; you cannot break it up, grasp it and call it your own without the part slipping out and joining the universe unawares. This common denominator in man is the Atman (the true ultimate Entity which is the essence of all that exists, and everything exists in and through it), and religion tries to view man as the Atman. Therefore, if you try to take religion as the unifying medium, then alone does your

attempt cover the whole of mankind and you have universal unity in the true sense.

Let us ever try to do all that we can, individually as well as collectively, to take to all the corners of this earth the message of the true, Atmic nature of man, the message of the oneness in the spirit of the whole of mankind, the message of unity of the entire mankind. Let us try to take to every home and to every heart throughout the world this message: 'Eko Devah Sarvabhuteshu Gudhah'-There is one Divine Essence in all that exists; and even as butter is hidden in milk, this Atman is hidden in all names and forms that constitute the phenomenal universe. Thus alone can we awaken man to this great truth that the entire world is pervaded by One entity and that you are that essence, and, therefore, everyone is nothing but your own reflection. You see yourself in all mankind, nay, in all creation. Thus alone will the true feeling of Atmic oneness come to dwell in the hearts of men, and this is the greatest guarantee for complete unity and lasting peace.

It may be an ideal which is difficult to attain; but the difficulty of a sublime ideal should not deter us from striving for its attainment, because by every attempt we contribute towards the attainment of that great ideal, and the accumulated result of this combined effort may one day bring peace and unity in mankind. Let us all exert sincerely, but without thinking of the results or the fruits that might come out of it. The glory lies in striving for a great ideal and not necessarily in concerning ourselves in getting something out of it. The attainment of the result must be left in the hands of the Lord.

May we all think and feel the spirit of oneness in the Atman. May we all talk about the true fundamental oneness of spirit in mankind. May we all propagate this great ideal of oneness of Atman. Through our lives, individually and

collectively, may we radiate Atmic oneness in thought, word and deed. May we daily pray that all mankind may soon awaken to the glorious realisation of the fundamental unity of mankind in the Spirit, in the Atman; for, in the Atman we are all one, though we may be different in body, in mind, in intellect. In the Spirit, in the Atman we are all one and one alone—Ekam Sat, One is truth.

THE TRUE AUTHENTIC RELIGION WE NEED TODAY

Radiant Immortal Spirit! Beloved and blessed children of the Divine!

Just as the different paths of spiritual practises are but varied approaches to the Divine through one or another aspect of your human nature and faculties such as action (service), emotion (devotion) thought force (meditation) and intellectual reasoning (philosophical enquiry and quest), even so, the various religious systems that exist and prevail in this world today, are ever so many ways of approaching the one Supreme Cosmic Reality, THAT is transcendental and cannot be encompassed within the confines of the limited experience of our finite senses or our finite inner cognizing instruments of mind and intellect. That is known as "Para" (meaning beyond), that which transcends, that which goes beyond. that which is beyond. There are many effective, equally valid religions. They are therefore to be equally revered, equally recognised and equally cherished-not merely tolerated. For it is not so much a question of tolerating another's point of view, but rather being able to understand it from his or her viewpoint. If you are able to look through the eyes of the one with whom you cannot agree, then you will understand why that person is seeing it in that particular manner.

"In whatever way beings approach Me, even so do I go to them." (Bhagavad Gita, Chapter IV, verse 11). This is the motto or maxim par excellence for people to adopt in their approach to the so-called different religions. Religions are apparently different outwardly, but they are essentially one, they all exist for one great spiritual purpose. And that purpose

is to re-ligare, to "once again bind (man) back" to the Supreme Cosmic Source of man's being. There is really never any loosening of this bond or breaking of the connection between you and That Being. You ever abide in Him. But, because you have lost your spiritual awareness, you are regarding yourself as some other being, non-spiritual, material, physical, gross and phenomenal.

Due to this lesser, obscuring consciousness you are not able to experience and feel that essential spiritual connection between you and the Supreme Source of your being. But again and again the scriptures declare that there has never been a separation. He abides within you as your innermost Self And you abide in Him. You cannot abide anywhere else. For HE (THAT) is infinite, all-pervading, Omnipresent! The sages and seers who realised That Being within the deepest depth of their illumined spiritual consciousness were given the supreme inner experience that that Supreme Being is ONE and non-dual. That Being alone exists. That Being is the one and only Eternal Reality. This is the Truth. And because that Supreme Essence or Principle or Being is one and non-dual, then the many that we perceive, must necessarily be the outcome or emanation from That One Supreme Being. Even as various kinds of cotton cloth have different shapes and sizes and colours, yet they are of one material, namely cotton. As different types of golden ornaments like necklace, bracelets, ring, earrings, etc. worn by a lady, are all made of one material, namely gold, in spite of their apparent differences of size, shape and design, and as different kinds of pottery are all made of the same clay, even so the entire universe of innumerable names and forms is in essence but One Being in a grand and glorious cosmic manifestation. Therefore, the appearance of the many does

not invalidate the non-duality of the one Supreme Principle. IT alone prevails, One without a second.

All religions have come into existence in order to take man back to the eternal source of his being. Not only to take him back, but to bind him back, bring about a total and enduring abidance in the Divine Spirit. How? Either by the love of your heart, through devotion, prayer, adoration, glorification; or by the penetrating analysis of the intellect, constantly dwelling upon It, enquiring about It from all the various facets; or by concentrating all the scattered rays of your mental powers into one single unified ray and focusing that ray upon the concept of that One, Supreme, non-dual Divine Reality to the exclusion of all other ideas through the inner, mystical process called meditation. Or by trying to approach It by feeling the presence of that Being pervading and prevailing everywhere, now and here, appearing in and through all living beings and things and directing your entire life, love and thoughts into a continuous stream of selfless service unto that Supreme Reality in and through its various appearances as human beings, animals, insects and plants, all forms of life existing on earth, thus making yourself a servant of the immanent God indwelling all His creation. All religious systems ultimately are ascending movements in the direction of the one, supreme, non-dual Cosmic Reality Who is the source and origin of countless billions of universes, known and unknown. The means may be different, but the way is one, directed towards one ultimate destination, that is God and God-Experience. Call that Being by any name-it is the supreme, transcendental experience of the Cosmic Source and origin of your Being.

The above fact is precisely why religion can be made the basis of unity in the world. The tendency of historians as well as other observers has been to lay the blame for all

conflict, warfare, violence and bloodshed at the door of religion. They say that but for religious fanaticism and bigotry, but for the conflicts between the followers of various religions, there would not have been so much of hostility, strife and violence in this world. But, when it is pointed out to them that true religion means charity, compassion, harmlessness, brotherhood, humility, selflessness and love, that true religion means manifesting the divine qualities mentioned in the scriptures in our every-day life, then they will realise that all those who shed blood in the name of religion are the most irreligious people. They are far away from religion and all their actions are the direct contradiction of the basic religious spirit. Those who hate others, are the destroyers of religion. They are not people who live religion, but they kill the spirit of religion by their actions. All kinds of differences and conflict arise from intolerance, greed, hatred, jealousy, passion and selfishness, and the most effective means for counteracting and overcoming these base animalistic tendencies of human nature is the factor of true religion. For the prime purpose of religion is the purification and uplift of man's nature. The very first step of religion is to see that man turns away from evil towards good. The following of a good life of virtue is the main concern of religion. This has ever been the message of prophets and God-men. It is only when all people, literate and illiterate, begin to get a knowledge of the spirit of religion, which is the same for all men, and it is only to the extent to which all men are made to understand the true spirit of real religion, that they will be heading towards a day when peace will prevail upon the entire earth and goodwill amidst mankind. With the understanding of the true spirit of religion, religion can be chosen as the proper medium to build the unity of mankind.

Religion in its rarest form has always existed. For religion is nothing but the relationship between God and His creation. Religion is the close, inseparable, eternal, spiritual relationship that exists between the Supreme Being and all that has manifested out of that Being as part of His creation. As human life progressed on earth and the Supreme Being willed to remind His creation that He exists and that between Him and His creation is an inseparable link, a close relationship, and to make them aware of that relationship and thus enrich their lives, He has been sending His chosen ones, illumined ones, who come filled with His light. Their very presence evokes within us the awareness of the source of our being. This process has never stopped. Down millennia, down the corridors of time, generation after generation, there have always come and had advent on this earth plane special beings, whose central function has been to make all their brethren aware that there is a great Reality ever present, which is of the nature of immeasurable grace, which is of the nature of imponderable perfection, which is of the nature of peace beyond expression. They have come to remind us, to tell us the glad tidings: "Even though you are on the earth, you are not of the earth!" That Being is your eternal source and origin. You have your roots in that Being and that Being is your true abode. He is the eternal ground in which you are rooted even while being embodied here on earth as a passing traveller. Ultimately He is not only your divine destination, but He is your divine destiny. He is the very fulfilment of your existence when once again you attain Him consciously.

As all rivers have their sources in different places and move in different directions, but ultimately join the same ocean waters of this earth, even so all different religious systems, all faiths and religious traditions have their origins in different

parts of our planet, at different periods in human history amongst different sections of our global human family with diverse backgrounds, and they seemingly flow in diverse directions, but all are ever moving, moving, moving towards one destination, to the one and only Universal Reality that has ever existed, ever exists and ever will exist.

Before creation had come into being, to whom did God belong? Which religion monopolised GOD before there was any creation at all, when God in His non-plural splendour, as the one absolute transcendental Being alone existed, when there was neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, planets, space, time, world, what to say of human beings and creatures? Then, what was His name? Who was there to give Him a name? Who was there to pray? Why do we fight over names? Over Allah, Jehovah, Zoroaster, Brahman, Nirvana, Siddha, Tao or Almighty Father in Heaven? What folly! Consider how many different names there are for the one element that you drink in order to slake your thirst. Water is the same thirst is the same. The function of water to slake the thirst is the same all over the world, but the name for water is legion due to differences in language. So, if we give different names to God, that does not multiply God, that does not make God many. That does not make God anyone's exclusive monopoly. There is only one non-dual Supreme Universal Spirit. If at all any beings have expressed IT in a truly impersonal, yet accurate manner, it is our ancient American Indian brethren. They called IT "The Great Spirit". God is the Great Spirit (Paramatman). Call Him Allah, call Him Ahura Mazda, call Him Almighty Father in Heaven, call Him what you will, It is the Great Spirit. Yes, THE GREAT SPIRIT!

All the great religious systems have come to make man aware of his relationship with that Great Spirit and to lead us

back to the awareness of that Great Spirit in whom we find ultimate perfection and fulfilment. That is the soul of all religions, to make man aware of his relationship with the Divine Spirit and to induce man to make his life a process of moving in that direction and ending in that culmination. Also to show man how to do it, how to attain that Supreme Being. All religions have at their heart this central truth of man's relationship to God. They also say that as man is related to God, so is God related to man. He is within man. He created man. He is present in His whole creation, but He is especially present in man. God created man and breathed His spirit into him. Man is not the same as Allah, but in man there is the Light of Allah. There is "That of God" in all beings. This is our reality. Therefore, our prayers address Him - as Father, "our Father who art in Heaven"-like father, like son. As the father is, so shall the children be. But are we? Are we? We glorify our father in so many words of praise, we describe Him in such a splendid manner, but is that splendid Being expressed through us? If our religion is authentic, if our religion is true, then day after day, from morning till night, everything that we do should be a proof should be a further affirming and confirming that within us God dwells and that He is hundred percent of our essential being. Our reality is God's perfection. Within the seed lies the towering tree with all its flowers, fruits and foliage and its great height and spreading might. Even so is God within us. The God-principle or the God-essence is your eternal identity, your imperishable real identity. Not your temporary human personality! The wave is of the Ocean. The ray is of the Sun. A note is of the Grand Symphony.

The world has suffered enough from lip-service to religion and a life totally in contradiction to all the teachings of religion. What is religion but fulfilling the Will of God in our

daily lives as It has been expressed through all the great scriptures of the world, as it has been expressed in the lives of all the saints, sages, seers, messiahs, prophets and messengers whom He has been sending time and again to tell us what His Will is for us. Fulfilling the Will of God in our daily lives is the soul of religion. Today, more than ever before in human history, there is only respect and reverence paid to God in the outer practice of religion, but there is absence of the true religious spirit within us. The authentic and genuine religion we need today is not merely a religion of paying respect and reverence to the outer practice in the fulfilment of ceremonies and sacraments, of rites and rituals, but the religion of practical spirituality, living to express the God within us in our daily lives. Our religion should no longer be confined within the four walls of our places of worship, be it temple, synagogue, church or mosque, fire temple or Gurudwara. It should come out and become a religion that is practised in our homes, in the marketplace, in our neighbourhood and in our professional field, from earliest dawn and daybreak right through until nightfall and sleep. Yes, religion is all the waking hours of each day of our life. We must bring religion out of our places of worship, break all compartmentalising walls and corners and make our religion commensurate with all life. The whole of our life should be a process of expressing our religious faith through practical spirituality, thus proving that we are indeed children of God, proving indeed by our very lives that God is in us and that He is an all-perfect ocean of compassion and love, an ocean of peace and joy, an ocean of all that is auspicious, blessed and beautiful. The practice of spirituality-this is indeed the religion we need today. Otherwise, if religion is to be a thing confined to some time of the week in some place of our city and no more than that,

then our world has no hope of any improvement through its religions and religious leaders. It is only when true religion fills us from the top of our heads to the tip of our toe-nails and becomes part and parcel of the living of our lives, even as breathing, then alone this world can still be a place where to live would be a joy, to live would be to love.

At this moment, at this point, let us all make up our minds that at any given time, in any place, whosoever is with us, is our neighbour, is our brother or sister. We are all living amongst our brothers and sisters only. "Therefore, whoever is in front of us is our brother. Let us embrace him with the warm embrace of our love. Let us relate ourselves by expressing His love to each other. For, ultimately that is the great commandment of all the divine messengers, to love one another. Religion, as much as it means man's love for God, it also equally means man's love for man (in whom God dwells). If we make religion love for God and give no place in it for love for man, it is irreligion. Only clash and conflict, hatred and violence can come out of it. Therefore, may we all humbly pray to God to bring real light into our lives, so that we are all living to express God's perfection within us, living to manifest through thought' word and deed His love, His compassion, and that every home and every family becomes a centre of living spirituality. That would be the fulfilment of real religion and our world very badly needs it today.

Let me close with the simple and yet sublime prayer of the American Indians.

"O great spirit, whose voice I hear in the winds, and whose breath gives life to all the world, hear me.

I come before you, one of your many children. I am small and weak. I need your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty and make my eyes ever behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hands respect the things you have made,
my ears sharp to hear your voice.

Make me wise, so that I may know the things you have
taught my people, the lesson you have hidden in every leaf
and rock.

I seek strength not to be superior to my brothers, but
to be able to fight my greatest enemy-myself.

Make me ever ready to come to you with clean hands
and straight eyes so when life fades as a fading sunset, my
spirit may come to you without shame.

(Yellow Lark of the Sioux)

CHAPTER - 13 WORLD PEACE

WORLD PEACE

At this juncture in human history when not only is peace of mankind being threatened by doctrines of hatred, violence and warfare but the very existence of mankind, the very existence of different kinds of life forms in this world is being threatened by the likelihood of a catastrophic third war which will be a nuclear war, a holocaust, at this moment the thoughts of all human beings all over the world in all countries are directed towards peace. All pray that peace may prevail and it is with this devoted prayerfulness of attitude that we invoke the blessings and grace of God that he may grant to man the right insight and grant to man the right resolution, Satsankalpa to work for peace and to allow peace to prevail upon earth. With this prayerful attitude I share with you thoughts on the theme of 'World Peace'.

Peace is your birthright. For, in reality, your essential nature, your innermost real nature, Nija-svarupa, is peace profound. The great Universal Reality whom we refer to as God in immeasurable peace—profound, unfathomable and limitless peace—*Santo ayam Atma*. This Universal Spirit verily is of the very nature of profound peace. Peace, therefore, is the eternal, unchanging reality. Peace alone exists—timeless, transcending time, without beginning and without end. Peace is the eternal reality. God Himself is peace. But the restlessness, the clash and conflict, the violence and warfare we see upon the surface of this planet earth today, is the outcome of man's intransigence. It is the outcome of man's deliberate rejection of the sublime message of peace that God has been sending to this human world from time to time through

His great messenger to declare to man that he should walk the path of goodwill, harmony and friendship. He must recognise the oneness of the Supreme Universal Reality and as a consequence should recognise the brotherhood of all mankind under the Fatherhood of the Supreme Universal Reality which is one and non-dual. We are all children of the Divine. Therefore, humanity is a single family and brotherhood, is a relationship between man and man.

Each human being is really a spiritual brother of all the rest of human kind upon earth and if this fact is recognised then you start to dwell on the awareness of this fact that spiritually you are at one with all existence and the fatherhood of the universal parents God, Ahura Mazda, Jehova, Almighty Father, Allah, Ek Omkar Satnam, give it whatever name you wish. That Great Universal Reality which is the source and origin of all existence is the common meeting ground of all beings and under His universal, spiritual fatherhood all humanity is a single family related in terms of brotherhood. The recognition of this fact is the key to establishing and bringing about peace in this world. But unfortunately what do we see upon the surface of this earth at this present moment?

There is tremendous advancement of knowledge, great progress in different fields of human life and development of science and scientific technology and innumerable inventions. Man has taken amazing and marvellous strides towards progress and achieved great control of external nature. Unfortunately, despite this apparent progress, civilisation and advancement, man has brought about two great global wars within a period of less than twenty-five years in the recent past, causing unlimited destruction, death, damage and sorrow. Many young wives were widowed, many children orphaned, many parents deprived of their offspring and many cities destroyed. If this is a criterion by which to evaluate the actual

worth of so-called progress, advancement and civilisation of mankind, we have to come to this very sad conclusion that somewhere mankind has erred. Man has committed some blunder on this path of the advancement of science, development of technology and material progress. It is said that a tree is known by its fruit thereof and if all this advancement and progress and development of science and technology over the past two or three centuries has given to humanity the bitter fruit of hatred, conflict, war and violence, unlimited destruction and feeling and the living of his life.

God's peace is perennial and permanent but man superimposed upon it hatred and violence, insecurity and restlessness, warfare and conflict. There is no harmony. Discord has become the order of the day. If we contemplate this truth of the present situation we are confronted with a serious question-what is the cause for this losing of the way? Why is it that in spite of education, knowledge, refinement and so-called civilisation and etiquette, there has been something wrong somewhere? We have to admit that we have come a long way from the stone-age period of our historic ancestors, the cave-dwellers. Nevertheless, having come this far in refinement and civilisation in a certain part of our life, we still seem to have been unable to eradicate from our inner nature the brutal and beastial tendencies of violent reaction to things. Instead of trying to decide issues by love and understanding, mutual give and take, harmony and peace, in a friendly manner, we take recourse to violence. What is pitiable and deplorable is that mankind has failed to learn the lessons of these catastrophic conflicts and the calamitous wars. Man seems to be blind to the lessons and is ever preparing for fresher conflicts.

Manufacturing of armaments has become a very big industry in so many countries. Not only are the arms

manufactured for defence, for one's own safety and protection, but they are manufactured for aggression and offence, which countries are intent upon selling to other nations thus inducing them also towards violence, conflict and warfare. Arms sale has become big business and yet these very nations seem to be constantly declaring that they have peaceful intentions, they desire peace. Their very conduct, the actions they engage in, deny this statement and therefore mankind has become hypocritical. Who really wants peace? In truth what man wants is comfortable living. Whatever be the conditions between nations, Whatever be the conditions in the government, the ordinary citizen wants .to have a good job, a steady income and the fulfilment of his little desires and accumulation of things he is after—petty, perishable, material things—and whatever policy the government adopts, if it is able to provide for him these things—comfortable living, good job, steady income and a salary and the good things of life—he does not care whether the government is engaged in peace or in warfare.

One of the arguments given by governments is that the colossal manufacture of destructive weaponry is an industrial enterprise which creates employment for thousands and thousands of people and brings about steady national income. It brings about economic stability and if there were to be peace and if the manufacture of armament were to be stopped, then there will be widespread unemployment. Therefore, leaders at the top do not want this to happen and people who are employed in these industries do not want these industries to close down, because it is the main source of their income and their material prosperity. If you go deep into this question, no one really wants peace, though they give it lip loyalty or lip support to peace. They are interested whether there is peace or not, so long as they get what they want.

Under these conditions if we would still like to bring about a climate for peace, we have to re-educate the human individual into right thinking. People think in a haphazard way. There is no positive thought, there is no thought in the right direction and all this has resulted due to two or three very important factors. First and foremost, God who is an infinite ocean of absolute divine peace and blessedness, has tried to give to man this awakening message that peace is your birthright. You are of the very nature of peace. Deep within you there is an innermost centre which is purely spiritual and that inner spiritual centre of yours is a part of the Universal being. Therefore, by its very nature it is absolute peace. There abides peace in your heart.

To enter within to a life of introspection and meditation and to experience that peace within and thus become established in inner individual peace, is the first step towards world peace. When individuals are established in inner divine peace, each one of them will become dynamic centres for the radiation of this vital living peace vibrant within them and through their life and through their activities they will begin to radiate this peace in their own environment, and into their own particular circle of beings with whom they have to live and move. Thus, everywhere there is an inner awareness that man's real nature is spiritual and that real nature is of the very nature of absolute peace, Santi, Shalom. If this awareness is sought to be brought about, then gradually it will pave the way for peace in greater and greater areas of human life and activity and world peace will not be an Utopia but an achievable factor.

Due to unfortunate recent materialistic tendencies and the appearance of philosophies rejecting the very concept of God, atheistic ideologies and Godless philosophies, social philosophies and schools of thought, we have rejected the

great teachings of our scriptures, the great teachings of world teachers of mankind who declared to man the necessity of walking the path of peace to experience real happiness because peace is the indispensable condition prerequisite to true happiness. Happiness is the outcome of peace. *Santamu leka saukhyamu ledu* (Without peace there is no happiness)—thus sang the great saint-poet Tyagaraja. Therefore, if you want happiness you must first of all establish peace in yourself. You must be able to give up the hard adamantine ego-sense and selfishness. The ego-sense and selfishness of the individual nature is one of the greatest obstacles to harmony, unity, brotherhood, love and peace. Selfishness is the greatest dire disease and bane of human nature. Unfortunately in the modern educational system prevailing all over the world the children are taught subjects pertaining to this material world, different fields of knowledge, pertaining to this gross physical universe. But in the schools, in the syllabus, in the curriculum there is no provision for teaching children love and brotherhood, peace and harmony, goodwill and friendship, which is the most essential part of the education.

Education is meant to draw out from within the human individual all that is sublime, all that is good and auspicious and blessed. It is not merely putting into the human brain a great deal of facts and figures and information. It is not like feeding statistical data into a computer; on the contrary, the process of education is a reverse process. It is a positive, creative process of bringing out from within the human individual these great hidden qualities of love, unity, harmony, brotherhood and peace. It is only when our entire educational system becomes reoriented in this manner that the future humanity will grow in an atmosphere of goodwill and brotherhood, love and harmony, of peace and tolerance, and then alone will world peace become a fact.

Prayer is a great power. It can bring peace, for it can link our inner self to the universal being who is of the nature of profound peace. Therefore, right education through unfailing daily prayer, individual as well as collective, and by giving up our selfish nature, hard-hearted egoistic and selfish nature, we can work towards the establishment of peace, first within the individual heart and then within this immediate environment and thus onward into ever widening circles. Peace can be brought about in this whole world among nations, races and all humanity. Peace be unto you. *Om , Santi, Santi, Santih.*

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UNIVERSAL PRAYER

O Adorable Lord of Mercy and Love !
Salutations and prostrations unto Thee.
Thou art Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.
Thou art Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute.
Thou art the Indweller of all beings.

Grant us an understanding heart,
Equal vision, balanced mind,
Faith, devotion and wisdom.
Grant us inner spiritual strength
To resist temptations and to control the mind.
Free us from egoism, lust, greed, hatred, anger and jealousy,
Fill our hearts with divine virtues.

Let us behold Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us serve Thee in all these names and forms.
Let us ever remember Thee.
Let us ever sing Thy glories.
Let Thy Name be ever on our lips.
Let us abide in Thee for ever and ever.

- Swami Sivananda